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# THE AGONISTS





# THE AGONISTS

## A TRILOGY OF GOD AND MAN

BY

MAURICE HEWLETT

MINOS KING OF CRETE  
ARIADNE IN NAXOS  
THE DEATH OF HIPPOLYTUS

O hapless race of men, who when they charged  
Such work, such wrath upon immortal gods,  
Begot what groanings for themselves, for us  
What wounds, and for our children's sons what tears!

LUCRETIVS, *De Rer. Nat.* v. 1183.

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
NEW YORK ::::::::::: 1911

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DEDICATED

TO

G. M. P. W.-E.

1895-1911



## INTRODUCTION

HERE are three barbarous old tales treated dramatically, the first and most barbarous never so treated before, I should suppose; the second a favourite with the Italians of the Cinquecento, and the third the theme of tragic poets from Euripides onwards. Here, for the first time, they are related as they should be, so that, under one cover, the reader has, for what it may be worth, the fate of Minos and his family express before him. Primitive the tales certainly are; but they are in the great manner. It will be my fault, not theirs, if in the presentation of them here they suffer any eclipse.

A good story well told will carry almost anything the author is capable of packing into it; and in these three, I must explain, I have wished to present more than legend



alone. I have thought to find in them taken *seriatim*, and then together, a philosophical underflow which, if I have been rightly inspired, ought to be discernible in my music. There is an effort to express dramatically in *Minos King of Crete*, *Ariadne in Naxos*, and *The Death of Hippolytus*, respectively and collectively, the fallacies which underlay the ancient conceptions of Godkind and Mankind and accounted for the ancient views of their relationships. You take, as a starting point, the three essential qualities of God to be Power, Love, and Knowledge, and admit the essential qualities of Man to be the more excellent as they more nearly approach those of God; and you have in each of these plays an example of the failure of a typical personage, God or man, for lack of one or other quality. Minos was the son of Zeus, and failed because, although he had Knowledge from his Father, he had not Power. In *Ariadne in Naxos* the God Dionysus is the protagonist, and his tragedy (and the woman's) lay in this, that he had Power over men, but could not win their Love. Lastly, in *The Death of Hippolytus*, we have a case of Love without

Knowledge—that is, self-knowledge. Collectively, the trilogy presents a tragic story of the failure of God to implant himself in man, and of man to receive into his nature the divine substance; and the inference, or one of them, is, or may be, that the divine qualities can only mate with human faculty in the ideal presented to mankind in the Incarnate God of the Christians. To my mind that is clear. I hope some day to complete my trilogy with an Epilogue concerning the Passion of Christ. So much, then, for the under-current of this work, never obtrusive I hope; for I realise exactly that a play cannot succeed upon philosophical excellence. If the story is dramatic and the numbers give it due lyrical expression, the philosophy may be interesting in itself and may enhance the interest in the plot; but otherwise it can avail the poet nothing.

I should like to add a word as to the versification, to which I have, in every line, in every phrase, endeavoured to give an immediate, personal and musical impress. I mean by that that the prosody has varied throughout with the mood of the personages, and as the dramatic situation called forth

natural lyrical expression. There is no metrical system, consequently, but that conditioned by the subject; yet I believe that, read aloud and as a whole, each play will induce a specific mood, a specific kind of emotion in the hearer. Believing as I do that all poetry must be addressed to the ear, as it is undoubtedly composed, I shall not deny that I have aimed at a totality of impression and have considered more the beauty of the whole than of the parts. Nor shall I deny that Wagner's method in opera has seemed to me entirely applicable to poetical drama. Wagner's libretti were written on a strict metrical system; but his music was not. In my plays I have followed faithfully, I believe, the music which I have certainly heard, but am incapable of rendering otherwise than by rhythm. All that apart, I have never been able to see the propriety of expressing an infinite variety of moods in one conventional measure. Here, surely, poetry may borrow from prose without ceasing to be poetry. The burden of the iambic pentameter has been too many for the poets—and, it seems, for their hearers. Now all I ask

of mine is that the verse be read to them as prose, with the stresses where they would naturally fall, and full value given to the vowel sounds of ordinary speech. If this rule be observed, and the indicated pauses followed, the three plays ought to be revealed as verse.

I composed them in 1895-6-7; have tinkered them at intervals since. Finally I have thrown them back into the melting-pot, and they have emerged as good as I can make them.

LONDON 1911.





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I

MINOS KING OF CRETE



## THE ARGUMENT

KING MINOS of Crete claimed to be the Son of Zeus, who as a Bull had carried EUROPA, his mother, thither. His title was Son of the Bull, and that was the cognizance of his House. Now in the seventeenth year of his reign POSEIDON sent a white bull out of the sea to tempt him. Instead of offering it in sacrifice to that great God he caused DAEDALUS to devise a labyrinth at Cnossus in which to keep it. Then the curse upon his House began. His wife PASIPHAË sinned monstrously, and was delivered of MINOTAUR the monster, scourge and devourer of the Cretans. KING MINOS aghast, but knowing nothing of his wife's guilt, went to seek counsel in the next year of his reign of his Father and Lord on Mount Ida: for such was his custom every ninth year. While he was on his journey home to Cnossus, QUEEN PASIPHAË died. At this moment the play begins.



## PERSONS

DAEDALUS, the Athenian.

GRAULIS, nurse to PASIPHAË.

A PRIEST OF ZEUS.

CRETAN ELDERS.

A HUNTSMAN.

MINOS.

PRIESTESS OF ARTEMIS DICTYNNA.

A MESSENGER from Athens.

A SECOND MESSENGER from the same city.

## SCENE

The sea-wall at Cnossus. In the centre of the wall a watch-tower. Right, the King's House with the Judgment Seat. Left, Shrine of the Oracle of Artemis-Dictynna.

## TIME

Before Dawn, then Sunrise.

## MINOS KING OF CRETE

As the curtains open DAEDALUS, sharp against the sky, is seen motionless on the watch-tower, looking eastward over the sea. The wash of the waves on the beach below the wall is all the sound heard. Presently, from the King's House comes the sound of low but continued wailing, as of women mourning. DAEDALUS lifts his arms out, holds them so, then drops them in despair.

He folds his cloak about him, and speaks, looking over the sea.

### DAEDALUS

Watchman, wait thou and watch;  
The night neareth her death.  
With her the wicked and weary alike  
Make an end of moaning, sleep and forget;

[He pauses, opens his cloak and lifts his hands.

And the sun sweetens the world!

[He lifts his face and turns his cheek to feel the wind.

A wind shivers the sea: with dawn  
The King should come; from the Gates of  
the Sun,  
He and the Dawn together!

He stands looking out in silence. The wailing of women in the house rises in volume and strength. DAEDALUS is aware of it now. A long note as of a trumpet; then silence. DAEDALUS thrills and listens.

The wicked and weary shall end their  
moaning,  
The King come from the house of God—  
He and the Dawn together!

GRAULIS comes quickly out of the King's House, holding high her hands.

GRAULIS

Daedalus! Daedalus! Daedalus!

DAEDALUS

I am about the death-bed of the Night.  
Who calls? Who comes between me and  
my dead?

GRAULIS

Death has been busy. Come down.  
O Daedalus, come quick!

DAEDALUS

Thou, Graulis!  
Stay, I come down.

He comes down from the wall and meets GRAULIS. She has covered her head, she bows it, and stretches out her hands like a blind woman feeling for the way. DAEDALUS watches her gravely.

DAEDALUS (very grave)

No need to cover thy head.

GRAULIS (whispering, in haste)

O Daedalus, come with me!

DAEDALUS

No need to peer upon me.

GRAULIS

I implore, I implore——

DAEDALUS

The sick breath of the night  
Reads me thy rune.  
So she is dead! Died mad—  
Loathing herself!  
Speak, is that true?

GRAULIS

She is dead, Daedalus.  
Ah, man, have mercy!

(Lifting hands and voice)

Golden Pasiphaë is dead! and we  
Orphaned of so much light!  
Ai, ai! my lovely one, my lovely head!

[She rocks herself about.]

## DAEDALUS

Out on thy whining, woman. Thou and I  
know  
How lovely her life was, and whether blest.

## GRAULIS (shocked)

Hush, O hush,  
Blame not the dead.

(Brokenly)

She loved me, who was lovely, and is dead.

## DAEDALUS

(Recoils, then snatches her wrist with fury)

Lovely, thou fond old fool!  
Lovely! whose hot sin  
Made Heaven shudder, and Crete cower!  
Made me a dog, and Minos  
Byword of shame among men.

(Abruptly breaking off)

Tell me, old fool, of him  
I dare not name—that thing  
This lovely mother has made.

## GRAULIS (in terror)

Hush, for God's pity!



DAEDALUS

But thou shalt speak——

GRAULIS (whispering)

Safe!

Safe in the web thy cunning wove for her  
sake——

Safe while Crete feedeth it——

DAEDALUS

With blood!

GRAULIS (after a pause)

She died mad, craving the sight  
Of that which her womb——of that dread!

DAEDALUS

Of her babe, thou wouldst say?

GRAULIS (wildly)

Ah, no, no! O God——

DAEDALUS turns his back on her and paces the scene.  
GRAULIS comes after him to tell him the tale.

Lovely she was, and loved me, but died mad,  
Not knowing of her sin, nor her sin's fruit,  
Nor me, who knew of both, and loved her  
still.

After that wild hour  
When her dire anguish made a child of her,  
And floated all her terror and her sin  
Out in a tide together—she wailed all day,  
“Ah, Graulis, Graulis, hold me, let not go,  
My two hands, Graulis!” So she moaned  
all day,  
And all the long hot nights, but never saw  
Who held her, stroked her hair, tendered the  
cup  
To her dry lips. . . . And she was my child,  
Fostered upon my breasts! Shall a mother  
hold back  
When her child cries?  
Wilt thou talk of her sin  
To me, her mother, that loved her?  
Out on thee, childless wretch!

All day, all night she clung and moaned for  
me  
To come—and I was there!  
“Graulis!” she wailed, and “Graulis!  
Graulis!  
Come to me!” I, who was there!  
Who never left her!  
Only, in all that house, I loved her,  
Only in all that house, she knew not me!  
At last, as one that could bear no more  
sorrow,  
Nor separation from me, whom she loved—  
And I there, holding her!—

She threw her two arms out, as a child,  
And wailing, "I am thirsty, give me drink,"  
Ere I could feed her, sighed her breath away,  
And lovely lay  
As if sin were not, and she  
The last born sister of her children—  
My Queen Pasiphaë—dead!

## DAEDALUS

Dead of her sin,  
And in sin, dead.

## GRAULIS

No man could look and think sin,  
Nor her rebuke. The perfect are a law  
Unto themselves. Refuse her not  
The peace she testifies.

## DAEDALUS

Her sin is lead about her neck—  
She drowns in it, and drowneth this land,  
Tainted by her.

## GRAULIS

Judge not thy benefactress, man.  
As for me,  
All my old breath shall honour her.

(Quickly)

And what of thee—that helped her?

DAEDALUS

Helped her?

GRAULIS

To hide her horror—ay!  
Ay! and to make her horror.

DAEDALUS

What of the King, thy master and mine?  
What of King Minos, coming home with  
dawn?

GRAULIS

What of him, servant of Minos,  
Served as thou servedst him lately?

[DAEDALUS stands confused.

(Eagerly)

Will he be served by tales of the dead?  
How shall it serve him to scorn the dead?  
Or tell the tale of the Sin? Thou durst not  
Deny the rites—thou durst not.

DAEDALUS turns away and hides his face. GRAULIS watches him intently. Presently he uncovers and looks skyward.

DAEDALUS

I loved her, she was lovely: let the rites  
Be fully done, that so her soul go down  
Decently to the windy house of the dead.

Then, when they see the stains upon her,  
 And Hell is silent, one shall say, O Lord,  
 King of the dark, this was a Queen:  
 She beareth sacrifice, her hands,  
 Her wicked body, are washed in water:  
 Take her, she was lovely, and loved much.

[He pauses, then adds grimly

And was much loved, God knows, and over  
 much!

[He turns to GRAULIS.

If thou wouldst hide these things, do the  
 rites now.

Set up the pyre, anoint, dress her fairly  
 In virgin white. So let her pass for a  
 Queen,

Not carrion.

Then meet Minos, Searcher of hearts!

[GRAULIS goes swiftly into the house.

A little while, O Crete,  
 And Daedalus, thy knave, must take his  
 wages,  
 Find the dark road, and journey it alone.

The shaping hand, the spinning brain,  
 The joy of his toil a man may take,  
 Soul, Soul, are these in vain?  
 Heart, must thou break?  
 Her heart to my heart leaned and spake  
 In urgent whisper and low,

“Do this sin for my body’s sake!”  
O lovely body that I loved so,  
O vile heart, that dared not know  
Wreck of body and brain—  
Nor thy toil vain!

He stands mute in despair. The PRIEST OF ZEUS  
comes out of the shrine.

PRIEST

Dost thou watch, Daedalus?

DAEDALUS

The morning breaks.

PRIEST

With comfort, or promise?

DAEDALUS

The King cometh not.

PRIEST

Then is the End upon us.

DAEDALUS

There is Death: pray to him.

PRIEST

Minotaur hath more pity,  
For he would end Crete in one drench of  
Death;  
But the Gods kill slowly.

DAEDALUS

How long can we endure?

PRIEST

Minotaur feedeth apace.

DAEDALUS

Death comes but once——

PRIEST

Shall a man live, with his fate  
Burning before his face?

DAEDALUS

He that knows he must die,  
Does he care if he live?

The funeral procession of women, bearing PASIPHAË uncovered on a bier, comes out of the King's House, and passes over the stage to a wailing chant.

PRIEST

One dead!

DAEDALUS

Dead, dead.

PRIEST

What dreadful stroke——?

DAEDALUS

Ask me not. Death is busy here.  
Better die quick, as she died.

PRIEST

Yes, for to wait,  
To wait wide-eyed, worketh madness.

[He sings of the terror of Crete.

Men dare not meet each other  
For fear to read the grief,  
And weep to see it, and drown  
All manhood out; but each  
Goeth apart with his mantle over his face,  
And letteth the pain gride,  
Hanker and grope in his heart;  
And setteth his teeth, lest his brother  
See his pain, and utter a cry,  
And a whole city go weeping.  
So he endureth, till night  
Cover him up from his brother's sight.

Look to the shore. What seest thou there?



DAEDALUS (on the wall)

I see the dust of the surf.  
The trees stir not; birds float  
Nested upon the waters.

[Smoke goes up from the sea-shore.

A soul goes shuddering out, like a prayer.  
Pray for it.

[The rim of the Sun comes up from the sea.

PRIEST

Lo, lo, the Sun!  
Your prayer is heard. Minos returns,  
Heartened by secret lore—  
Knowledge gotten of God.

DAEDALUS

Send so! For if he knows, what need to  
tell?

PRIEST (inspired)

Nine years have waxed and waned  
Since our Lord sought his Lord  
On Ida, treading where  
No foot of man might dare,  
The thicket hushed by God.  
Four cycles of such scope  
Have crowned his sacred head

Since he, our final hope,  
Took up the godlihead  
His father gave. As a sword  
He weareth Zeus's word,  
And as a kingly cope  
Lieth King Zeus's dread  
On Minos, Son of Zeus,  
Minos, Son of the Bull!

DAEDALUS, who has been watching, now sees a procession at hand.

DAEDALUS

Make now your prayer. See—  
The Cretan Elders come to meet the Dawn.

PRIEST

Go down to them  
While I cry to the Sun.

DAEDALUS

Nay, I have other work. Let Crete save  
Crete.

DAEDALUS comes down from the wall and goes slowly into the King's House. The PRIEST turns him to the Sun, and prays with lifted hands. The ELDERS enter, singing the Parabasis.

CHORUS

First I salute you, Hills,  
Guardians of Crete, with brows

Careful and hands uplift:  
Thee, Dictè, beneath whose moon  
Dwelleth the Goddess, the lonely one;  
Thee, Dictè, from whose bare crag,  
Casting her delicate treasure  
Seawards, the maid Britomartis  
In death found life. Next to thee,  
Ida! whose haunts great Zeus  
Knew and still loves.

You also,

Cydonian, Sea-Sentinels,  
Sisters who, linkt in ice,  
With glittering crowns arow,  
Watch while night on the heels  
Of day followeth and cloudeth them.  
O ye dread haunts of God,  
Pathless, dim and untrod,  
By men adored from afar,  
By that great strength ye are,  
Holding your steadfast way  
Through good and evil report,  
Through tempest and our dismay,  
Through blinding snow and frost—  
Ye that only abide  
Mid chance and change, for no man  
Knows, nor his fathers have told him,  
When ye were not as now—  
Listen, each haunted place,  
Ye hills, each quick with a God,  
Listen! most evil case  
Is on us; our feet have trod

The steep that leadeth astray  
By pain from the clear way;  
We have slipt in our own blood,  
And day draggeth on day!

Terrible rumour is heard from the city. They draw  
closer together, and whisper to each other.

How shall I tell the story,  
The crying fear?  
The watchman dead at his post,  
Stiffened with fear as a man bitten by frost!  
Doom in the thick air!

[A loud cry. Then silence.

The sound of a voice in fear!  
One shrill cry like a trumpet blast—  
And again—and again!  
The Guard called out, the Assembly in haste,  
The panic, the rain  
Of voices—"I saw it!" "O hush ye!"  
"'Tis here!"

"Make fast!"

"Are the children past?"

"Are they safe at home?" All the stifled  
pain,

The open dread  
Of men shamefully dead  
Lies about Cnossus, darkens her ways.

[Another cry, with the scream of a woman.

Minotaur! Minotaur! Minotaur!  
Blood-feeder, raving, insatiate

Lecher for flesh!  
Curious lust and inordinate  
Hanker for delicate meat!  
Sweet blood, light breath,  
Virginal breath he needeth;  
Day after day he feedeth  
Upon the treasure we cherish!  
Child after child of ours,  
Fruit of our love's flowers,  
We must see perish!  
Not our paid lives  
Whose work is over and past he craveth—  
More than that a mother will spend  
For the life she loveth,  
To die that it live!  
We have fathers to give  
Their joyance of days for the sons they  
    begat—  
But Minotaur slayeth more rarely:  
Leaveth the sire, leaveth the dam  
For the little lamb—  
Slowly, surely, ravenous, taketh him!

Their fear gives way to repining. Then with a  
common impulse they turn imploring to the Shrine of  
Dictynna.

Queen of the Hills, O Maid  
Stainless, the unafraid,  
From whose grave, tender eyes  
Light as of evening skies  
Shineth and sheddeth balm

On men! O quiet and calm,  
Thou who with bent down head  
Dost stand above the bed,  
And with thy torch's light  
Direct the newborn sight  
Unto thy holy face,  
That its first view be grace—  
Hear us and help us Thou,  
Maid of the open brow!

They stand with stretched-out arms, as if expecting a sign; but none comes. Then they turn to their philosophy.

Seeing to none 'tis given  
To read wisdom from Heaven;  
Seeing the Gods reign  
Neither pitying our pain,  
Nor stooping, rather pursuing  
Their sport in our undoing—  
It doth become us, earthwise,  
To You, Hills, to lift our eyes;  
Loving the ancient law,  
To fold us within your awe,  
Win strength from your strength to abide  
What fortune us may betide.

They now turn their faces above the city to the ramparting hills.

O ye hills, grant us your patience;  
O hills, your peace be upon us!  
May the good Gods of the hills  
Lay benediction upon us!

The PRIEST, his prayer finished, joins the ELDERS and speaks with them.

PRIEST

Sons, ye do well to call upon your hills,  
For there She wonneth who is Lady of them.

CHORUS

Hymnia called, best praised in song—  
Seeing her breath is music.

PRIEST

This load shall lift and pass  
With the King's coming.  
He, Minos, alone  
In Ida's thicket, there  
Alone with his father Zeus,  
Gains secret wisdom from him  
Of cause, and purpose, and law—  
Evil and Good to see, to weigh, and to  
    choose.  
Burdened with which awful freight  
He cometh—peace to ensue.

CHORUS I

Great is Minos! But see—  
Who is this newcomer?

## CHORUS II

Bringing the smell of woods  
And dust of country ways  
Within these tainted walls!

## CHORUS I

This is some uplander,  
Huntsman grim with weather,  
Who not as a townsman walks.

## CHORUS III

Nay, but as master of Time,  
Not the pitiful slave.

The HUNTSMAN has entered the city. He is the embodiment of earthy simplicity and plain dealing. The ELDERS watch him, and converse in undertones as he looks deliberately about him.

## CHORUS

What needest thou  
In the King's Gate?  
What dost thou seek  
With thy steady eyes?  
Is it a vow  
Of love or hate  
Draweth thee on,  
Purposeful,



To the strong tower  
Of the House of the Bull?

He comes towards them: they await him now in  
silence.

### HUNTSMAN

Tell me if this is Cnossus, that the House  
Of Minos, King in Crete.

### CHORUS

An hundred cities hath Crete,  
Lordship from sea to sea,  
Whereof the frontal jewel  
Is Cnossus; wherein thou art—  
Cnossus: for here King Zeus,  
When he had stemmed the flood—  
God veiled in the girth  
And silken hide of a Bull—  
Splendid lover, abode  
With the white maid  
Europa, chosen and set  
Apart to be mother of Kings,  
Sons of God! Here our Lord,  
Splendid lover, saw light  
Flutter and fill the eyes  
Of Minos, glory of Crete,  
Son of the Bull!

But thou, who art thou? Whence come?  
From what outland, to seek him?

## HUNTSMAN

From Ida come I, from the forest,  
To meet this Minos.

## PRIEST

From Ida, thou! Dost thou know  
The holy Mount, and the Grove  
Sacred to Zeus, where no man  
Dare tread, lest he meet with God?

## HUNTSMAN

I know the place, and that God  
Walketh in secret there  
Unshadowed by Sun.

## CHORUS

Seek Minos there.  
There he walketh with God!

## HUNTSMAN

Betimes I left it; the moon  
Shone in the trees. I saw no man.

## CHORUS

How shouldst thou see  
King Minos, walking with God!

HUNTSMAN (slowly)

Walketh Minos with God ?

PRIEST

Each ninth year he is rapt  
Deep into Ida; and God  
Breathes upon him, and pours  
Wisdom into his ear.  
Then he comes home a God—  
God to Crete and this people.

The HUNTSMAN ponders this saying in silence, leaning upon his spear. His questions following are very slow and deliberate, the answers quick and eager.

HUNTSMAN

And now on Ida he walks—  
He, Minos, with God ?

CHORUS

A Son, he walks with his father.

HUNTSMAN

Nine years ago he walked  
Ida ? Minos with God ?

CHORUS

A son, with his father Zeus.

HUNTSMAN

Minos alone!

CHORUS

Alone with God.

[A pause.

HUNTSMAN

I need to see this Minos.

[The Elders are amazed.

CHORUS

Thou! What is thy need?  
Is it a grief? A sin done?

HUNTSMAN

Grief, a sin, a wrong done;  
A price for blood,  
A life for a life:  
These I require of Minos.

They enquire of each other dumbly, then volubly  
of him.

CHORUS

Thou hast a blood-feud smouldering. Against  
whom?

HUNTSMAN

Minos, the wise king, shall point him out.

CHORUS

Who shed this blood? Knowst thou the  
man?

HUNTSMAN

That Son of God will know him.

CHORUS

Yet I would learn thy grief.

[A pause.

HUNTSMAN (incisively)

Britomart's was my grief:  
My sister, she.

The ELDERS shrink back. All know the tale of  
BRITOMARTIS.

CHORUS

Alas for her! Alas  
For thee, O friend!

The HUNTSMAN rehearses his tale of BRITOMARTIS,  
as in a reverie.

HUNTSMAN

On Dicté, fronting the sea,  
Standeth the House of the shining One,  
Artemis, Delian-born.  
There served her Britomartis,

Virgin-witness, my sister,  
Vowed to the Virginal Goddess,  
Patroness of the pure.

## CHORUS

Artemis hath her now—  
Comfort thee, friend.

## HUNTSMAN

We, in our father's house,  
Dwelt on Ida; and saw  
(White as her soul) the shrine  
Heading the sea, as peak  
Looks upon peak from afar.

## CHORUS

Dicté and Ida, twin holds  
Of Godhead! Speed with thy tale.

## HUNTSMAN (slowlier)

Upon a day  
My sister left her charge, to keep the feast  
Of the New Wine at home. Ere next day  
dawn  
She left our hold: I watched her on the way  
Go down the valley by the winding road,  
Over the river bed, and by the bank  
Slow-climbing, breast the steep  
Where Dicté fronts the sea.

(Quickening)

I saw a horseman ride fast,  
Draw rein beside her, and stoop,  
Snatch, lift her up, drive spurs  
Deep—carry her off  
Over the windy hill.  
I saw her plead with wild arms,  
Flung back head, streaming hair—  
Vain! He had her. But she,  
Sudden, shook free, and on wings  
Fled down the wind, he pursuing,  
Husbanding his long lust.  
Dicte she clomb, whence the sea  
Lies far below, without sound,  
Deep-twinkling, not resting,  
Surging, drifting for ever!  
To that dim sea she held out  
Wide her piteous hands,  
Making her moan and prayer,  
“Maid of all maids, take me,  
Hold me fast!” O’er the steep  
Into blue air she launched  
Her soul’s frail raft—and from Ida  
I wailed her name, and still wail it!

[He pauses, then resumes.

And he, ravisher, thief,  
Rode his desolate way, scourging the earth  
As a black squall whippeth the sea.  
But I shall meet him: life for a life.

The ELDERS respect his vendetta, but try their philosophy upon him.

### CHORUS

Britomart's ghost, querulous,  
Men say, still flits about  
The precinct where her heart  
Was fixt, and in the night  
Her prayers sob round the aisles.  
So the haplessly dead,  
Pluckt too soon from the earth,  
Haunt it still, living again  
Unsubstantially there!

### PRIEST

Man's spirit never wholly leaves the earth  
Until the debt he oweth, and the debts  
Not paid him have been balanced and writ  
off.  
Often-times we are debtors to the dead.

### HUNTSMAN

There is a debtor to *my* dead  
Not quit. Minos must pay him.

Rumour swells as the stage lightens with the sun.  
The PRIEST sees the palace doors open and the slaves  
come out to lay a carpet on the steps. He points his  
hand towards them. Rumour, as if from the house,  
swells and gains volume.



## PRIEST

O timely, timely is Minos!  
Even as our lord the Sun  
Out of the eastern gates,  
So from his Golden House cometh the King.  
Set thou thy grief on his knees,  
Friend. Be sure he can lay  
Thy dead, so her sobbing and wailing  
Flit not the night through round the eaves.

The HUNTSMAN withdraws himself to the shadow of  
the wall, where he waits and watches.

## CHORUS

Would that our grief could find as easy a  
cure!  
But Death done gentlier weighs than death  
to come.

## PRIEST

Yea, it is Minos! O come,  
Let us fall at his feet,  
As to a pitiful father and wise.

## CHORUS

His glory is like a cedar  
Dominant in the forest,  
Whose branches still the air  
And roots hold earth in fee.

MINOS comes out of his house and faces the people.  
All raise their hands as to a vision of God.

## CHORUS

Stand fast for ever, chosen of Zeus!  
Son of the Bull, fast for ever!  
Lord of Crete and the Islands, Son of the  
Bull!

What, are my eyes so dim,  
Is their light gone out?  
Is a God come, dreadful, with thunder-  
shout?  
Nay, thou fool, 'tis the Sun cometh out  
To shame the darkness and doubt.

[They hold out their arms to him, imploring.]

Give us our dead, Minos!  
Give us peace and our dead!  
Peace that in elder days  
Spread the warmth of her eyes,  
The rose of her welcoming mouth,  
Gladdened us, praying to her!

[The PRIEST bids them silent.]

## PRIEST

The King speaks from his high throne!  
Wisdom hath found her an house; from the  
gates of his lips  
She poureth her embassies forth.

[MINOS, standing up, speaks.]

## MINOS

Sons, for I call you sons,  
Sons whom my father Zeus  
Laid on the fragrant lap  
Of Crete, your mother, and bade me  
Cherish you as I loved her!  
See now, through fair and foul  
Seasons I gave ye my days,  
All the worth of my manhood,  
Fruit of my age and blood,  
Statecraft, lore; add to that  
Counsel got from my father,  
That ye might prosper. But now,  
Seeing ye prosper not,  
Seeing that peace which ye had  
Is no peace, fast have I been  
In Ida, with Zeus my father,  
Spending the dew of prayer,  
Watching out nights and days,  
Yearlong watching! And lo,  
Our Lord in the forest breath,  
Adown the trees whispered, Go thou  
Back to thy House; seek Dictynna,  
The shining One, for a sign.  
Thus come I from his knees  
To her knees; thus will I do.

The people keep silence. The PRIEST voices their anguish.

## PRIEST

None too soon, Minos, thy sign.  
Minotaur ravens; our children die.

MINOS crosses to the Shrine, mounts the steps and stands before the altar. They light the altar-fire. As he makes his prayer he pours on wine and scatters frankincense.

## MINOS

Let me speak now, for lo!  
The sun is broad on the world.  
Give me drink-offering; cast down  
Your poppy crowns on the floor.  
Pouring the wine now, I say  
To thee, Dictaeon, the white,  
The perfect, whom we of all Gods  
Know best and oftenest invoke  
At each new moon, behold!  
In an acceptable time  
My prayer for light, since clear light  
From Heaven's threshold spreads on the  
world.  
Surely the time is ripe,  
Goddess! I, being old,  
With dreadful knowledge instored  
Of dreadful deeds, can no more  
Drag my fardel, but set it  
Down, and my sons set down  
Theirs, and await thy word.

## PRIEST

Ah, swift and secret! Ah, Huntress,  
Who when the night is high  
Rangest abroad through the brake  
Euboean, or where the hills  
Like unto silent waves  
Beset green Arcady!

O steadfast and sure, O holy,  
O grey-eyed Maiden far-seeing,  
O lovely as light on the hills,  
O kind as the sun on the hill-tops!  
O clear and pure, to whose beam  
Is given to cleave things hid  
In men's dark souls—lift now  
The shroud of pain from our heads!

Like as the wretch who in fever  
Turneth his aching eyeballs  
In thought to the water meadows,  
And in thought slaketh his tongue  
In running brooks, so thy children  
Stifled in sin, crave  
One pasture-fragrance from Thee  
Who savourest earth and blestest it.

All wait expectant. The veil of the Shrine is pulled back by invisible hands, and the PRIESTESS, shrouded all but the face in white linen, is seen swaying above the tripod.

PRIEST (aloud)

Lo, the unveiling!  
Fire and mist!

MINOS

Speak, Goddess!

PRIEST

Hush, for she speaks!

The PRIESTESS speaks the Oracle, in a monotone, as if by rote.

PRIESTESS

The voice of the fire in my voice  
Speaking to you, Crete:  
Because ye have made choice  
Of sin, with tears shall ye eat  
Ashes and dust for your meat,  
And salt blood for your wine.  
Ye have chosen with Hell your seat,  
Saith the Goddess, instead of mine;  
And that law is a law divine,  
Where soweth a man he shall reap.  
How shall ye ask a sign,  
Saith the Holy One, while ye weep?  
Work, work, ere ye sleep,  
Hold ye the ancient road;  
Tho' stony it be and steep,  
Ye shall win if ye take it, saith God.  
The road that your fathers trod.

Ye shall be saved if ye run—  
But woe upon woe till the blood  
Of the Bull be drainéd and done.

The Oracle is slowly veiled. Confused murmurs beset the crowd, in the midst of this MINOS utters a cry, and all are silent.

MINOS

The bull's blood! Lo, my sin  
Rises and shakes his head.

CHORUS (murmuring)

What blood of what bull is this?

MINOS

The bull's blood! Thou art stern,  
Poseidon, shaker of earth.

PRIEST

What wit save thine can fathom  
The rune we have here?

MINOS (to himself)

How shall a man know  
Fate in his deed? 'Tis done;  
From it grown rank, like flies,  
Issues innumerable  
Spread spores of death!

The people buzz among themselves, while MINOS, heard only by the PRIEST, moralises.

## CHORUS

When the word went forth, like an arrow in  
flight  
From a ventureful bow drawn to its height,  
Even as the struck eagle reels, and the night  
Filmeth his eyes, the King in his state  
Droops; and his panoplied might  
Drags on his shrunken limbs, intol'able  
weight.

## MINOS (aside)

Be sure a man's sin must out;  
Time not hide it, nor pomp  
Of deeds glorious. Below  
His broad raiment his limbs,  
Starved, naked, behold!

## CHORUS

I know that the mind of a man is a sherd  
Stored with knowledge like wind; for his  
word  
Bringeth no deeds to pass. Nay! as a herd  
Of kine passion driveth our wits  
Hither in panic, thither when lust is stirred—  
And Care the fisherman setteth his nets.

## MINOS (aside)

Too old am I, that with face  
Of brass I should bid fall



Dire mischance, sooner than shame  
 Confound me. Nay, an old man  
 Knoweth his strength.

CHORUS

Care the fisherman lays his net wide  
 Where the water hisses and spurts with the  
 tide.

Man in that sea, haggard-eyed,  
 Recketh not how the mesh edgeth him in,  
 Creepeth, clingeth about his side,  
 And the flood brimmeth up to his chin.

[The PRIEST holds up his hand

PRIEST

Peace, for the King will speak.

CHORUS

Peace, let the King speak.

MINOS (slowly)

I did a violence to God,  
 To Poseidon, when swoln with heat  
 Of renown I wagered against him  
 Power for power, and knowledge  
 For knowledge: man against God.

Poseidon sent a white bull from the sea  
 To tempt me. Now the time was at hand

When lining the shore we invoke  
The Sea-God and the Nymphs to bless our  
    increase,  
Offering sacrifice  
A yearling bull, unblemisht, white as the  
    foam,  
Even as this one, sent to tempt me.  
Now therefore came the Priests to where I  
    sat  
Solemn in judgment, saying  
"O King, Poseidon needeth back the bull;  
Crown him with laurel leaves and let him  
    die,  
That smoke of him ascend and all be well."  
    Thus they, but I whom Zeus delights  
To honour, shipt dishonourable thought  
Of that old Sea-God lurking in the deeps;  
Hardened my heart,  
Sent them empty back to their rites,  
To fruitless altars and foodless fires;  
And kept the bull to crown my herds  
And be a standing glory—like a wreath  
Of flowers set on a chapless skull.

Poseidon waiteth patient like the sea  
That draws all men to serve it late or soon,  
And calls me now by terrors on my head,  
Ringing words hounded about the sky,  
"Woe upon woe, till the bull's blood  
Be out." The bull's blood! God is wrath,  
And ye have paid in blood and tears

What only I should pay. If I, being King,  
 Sinned as a King, so kinglike I say  
 I am King enough to be ashamed of shame.  
 Let Daedalus win out  
 This white bull from the hold his wit  
     devised;

Bring him out, set a wreath upon his neck,  
 Gild him the horns and slay him, that the  
     blood

Smoke over sea, and the sea be fed.

Let one seek Daedalus.

A bystander goes into the house. The CHORUS face  
 the sea, while MINOS stands broodingly.

#### CHORUS

The sea is inexorable,  
 More than all the masters of men;  
 For the wind that furiously rideth,  
 The storm's war before which man hideth,  
 The Earthquake's tearing and rending  
 A sudden pit for life's quick ending—  
 What are such deaths but a flash in a pan?  
 Ah, but the patient sea  
 Ripples innumerably,  
 Laugheth quiet and slow  
 From ebb to flow;  
 Bideth his time till the extreme hour be run,  
 Then he calleth the sea-farers one by one.

While the People chant this chorus, GRAULIS and  
 DAEDALUS come out of the house and kneel before KING  
 MINOS.

MINOS

What is this, Graulis? Leavest thou thy  
mistress?

GRAULIS

Lord, Lord!

MINOS

How fares thy mistress and my Queen?

DAEDALUS (quickly)

Well, Sir.

She was tired, but sleepeth now.

MINOS (to Graulis)

Speak thou. What seek thine eyes?  
Look upon me.

GRAULIS

Sir, thy glance troubles me. Thou art high,  
And I am lowly, a slave.

MINOS

Thou art shorn, woman. Thou mournest—  
whom?

GRAULIS

Nay, 'twas a fever I had. Thus they rid it.

MINOS

What smoke of sacrifice went up  
As I rode hither? 'Twas dense in the air.

GRAULIS

They burn sea-wrack at the water's edge.

MINOS

What wailing heard I of women?  
What cries to Heaven?

GRAULIS

Sea-birds' cries, clamorous  
About the harvested sea.

[A pause. MINOS reflects.]

MINOS

I would that I saw thy mistress.  
Lieth she still abed?

GRAULIS

Still, my lord, very still.

MINOS

Stirred she not when the heralds  
Shrilled me upon the walls?

GRAULIS

So deep she was, she stirred not.

MINOS

Let her wake now.

[GRAULIS is silent.

Answerest thou not? Why camest thou?

GRAULIS

Sir, I know not—Oh, Sir—  
Oh, Great King—

MINOS

What then?

GRAULIS

I may not waken her.

MINOS

Thou art not yet so old that death were  
sweet;  
Nor will it serve the Queen  
That thou die, and I waken her.  
Do thou my bidding. Hence!

GRAULIS goes out with bowed head. MINOS turns  
to DAEDALUS.

Athenian, servant of my will,  
Heed thou me.

[The agitation of the People grows.

The Goddess spake above the altar flame,  
Murmurously through the thick smoke of  
the fire,

“Woe,” said she, “upon woe,  
Woe upon woe till the bull’s blood be  
out.”

I take the sin upon me, since I have sinned.

[The People mark DAEDALUS’ confusion and silence.

#### DAEDALUS

The Bull’s Blood!

[He stands aghast.

Here is no sin of thine.

Herein is Fate.

[The agitation of the People breaks out.

#### CHORUS

Ah, would that some green brake  
Of fern and leafy tree  
Hid up and sheltered me!

#### MINOS

Ay, but the sin was mine!  
Poseidon calls for the bull,  
The white bull from the sea.

[DAEDALUS says nothing.

Now if I slay him and pour back his blood,  
Shall not the curse be out?

[DAEDALUS says nothing.

Speak thou! Shall it not be out?

DAEDALUS

Not so, Minos, not so.

MINOS

Not so?

CHORUS

O that some warm sweet wave  
New freshening from the sea  
Might wash and quicken me!

DAEDALUS

That white bull which my wit,  
Quickened by thy decree,  
Kept from the sea, his master  
In secret hold, hath begot  
Offspring terrible, strange.  
Not out is the blood by the death of the  
Sire.

MINOS gazes at DAEDALUS, and in a dead silence  
questions him.

MINOS

Where is the young of him, Daedalus?



CHORUS (slow and urgent)

O wave, O breath of the wind,  
O ye hills calm and free,  
Make me strong, nourish me!

MINOS

Where is the young of him, Daedalus?

DAEDALUS

Safe, while ye feed him on Cretan lives.  
The Labyrinth holds him fast.

MINOS (aloud)

Minotaur! (Pause.) And the Dam?  
Speak!

[Dead silence.]

DAEDALUS

The dam died—of late.

[MINOS ponders him terribly.]

CHORUS (low and urgently)

O pluméd Night, O Death,  
Cover me silently,  
Hide me, encompass me!

## MINOS

Dark are thy words, but more dark  
The thoughts that throng me, and press  
My pulses to wild surmise.

[He stops there, then asks suddenly.

What of the Queen? Where is she?

## DAEDALUS

The Queen is dead. She is dead.  
Ask me no more.

[MINOS draws back and looks terribly about him.

## CHORUS (in terror)

Clamour is round me of sin not to be named,  
Hissed from shooting and hidden lips;  
Hints, intervals of doubt,  
Wailing, unrest!  
But silence is worst of all—  
When the dread powers of the dark  
Gather, crowd and pass over  
Like birds in a winter night!

MINOS starts forward and clutches DAEDALUS by the throat.

## MINOS

Dog, here is work of thine!  
That which thou didst for Son, didst thou  
for Sire.  
And the dam, Daedalus!

MINOS holds DAEDALUS shaking by the throat, and speaks to him fiercely, while the People wail and toss their arms.

CHORUS

The seed of man was sown  
In the broad lap of the Earth:  
So she conceived and gave birth.

MINOS

Pasiphaë is dead. And thou,  
Shalt thou live, Daedalus?

CHORUS

Earth was he, body and bone,  
Of Earth's blind ways, her delight,  
Clinging to sight.

MINOS

What shall be done to such—  
A trafficker in women, Daedalus?

CHORUS

But his blood and his breath  
Were wilder than aught that dwelleth in clay.  
Liquor of God were they.

MINOS

Thou that didst cage the bull to serve her,  
Shall his seed not fatten on thee?

## CHORUS

Fire-fraught was his blood,  
Hiding a fire, seeking more fire  
For food of its whole desire.

And the tide of his blood  
Surged against the walls of his veins,  
Maddened his reins!

That most fatally dowered,  
Prometheus, of all men's seed,  
Lifted up restless eyes  
From our most gentle earth,  
And sought the glint of the skies,  
And stole immortal fire,  
To our immortal woe.

For that keen flame of Heaven,  
Swifter than glancing light  
Or leap of sound, than the air  
More subtle, than day more bright—  
Thought! which to God is given  
Creative, is our despair,  
And a weight we cannot bear.

It flickereth in the brain,  
It throbbereth in the heart;  
Before its flashing our eyes  
Dazzle; we reel and go  
Whither our hot thought flies,

Up to the deathless Gods—  
O Fools, it is vain!

Man is a cage of pain,  
His thought is a pure thin fire  
That beateth against the locks  
And bonds of his grosser part,  
Astrain for the sky. And behold!  
The flame roareth and rendeth,  
And the war nor stayeth nor endeth.

Then at last when the bars  
Of the body, shattered and torn,  
Rend asunder, the flame  
Winneth the bitter stars,  
And man lieth prone in shame:  
Better not to be born!

MINOS has released DAEDALUS, and stands in deep thought. The HUNTSMAN now advances and confronts the King. The People remark him.

Who moves? Who presses forward?  
Watch that man.  
What needest thou  
In the King's Gate?  
What seekest thou  
With thy sunken eyes?  
Hast thou a vow?  
Is it love or hate  
Draweth thee on,  
Purposeful,

To the strong tower  
Of the Sons of the Bull?

HUNTSMAN

Minos, thou wise King, heed me.

MINOS

Who art thou?

HUNTSMAN

Grief that cries solace.

MINOS

Cry not in vain.

HUNTSMAN

Justice thou art. Do justice then.

MINOS

Rehearse thy plaint. Who art thou?

HUNTSMAN

One set apart  
To one fixed work.  
Blood calls to me for blood.

MINOS

A blood-price? For what blood? How  
shed?

HUNTSMAN

A virgin shed her own bright blood.

MINOS

By her own act slain?  
What blood for blood self-shed hast thou?

HUNTSMAN

His that made death her need.

MINOS

Who wagers her his life?

HUNTSMAN

I wager.

MINOS

And if thou diest?

HUNTSMAN

I stand for the right. I die not.  
Artemis points my blade.

MINOS steadfastly regards him without speaking.  
Presently he changes the theme.

MINOS

Not every huntsman pleaseth Artemis.

HUNTSMAN

True. He that hunted down the maid to  
death  
Pleaseth not her.

MINOS

Palterest thou?  
What is thy lot in this?

HUNTSMAN

My sister was the maid.

MINOS

Speak plainer, who this was.

HUNTSMAN

Her blood was Britomart's.

The King starts back, and his eyes at first meet the  
HUNTSMAN'S, then quail. The People observe it.

CHORUS

The King shrinketh, the man scorches him  
down!  
As fire eateth a beam.



So advanceth the gleam  
Of his hot-set eyes!  
Mark Daedalus. What is this thing  
Come to confront the King?

MINOS speaks as if unconscious of his whereabouts,  
as a sleeper to a shape in his dream.

MINOS

I know thee not.

[The other leaps forward, transfigured with rage.

HUNTSMAN

Man, thou knew'st Britomart!  
Judgment, thou Son of Zeus,  
Son of the Bull! let thy blood  
Wager against my blood!

The People are amazed. The PRIEST tries to move  
them.

PRIEST

Blasphemous, highland dog!  
Shall my ears not bleed?

HUNTSMAN

Let the King speak.

[But the King is not ready.

CHORUS

As elms in autumn show a hint of fire  
Ere all their goodly green is set in blaze,

And give to flame their topmost boughs,  
So is our good lord's kingly calm  
Ploughed by contorted pain  
That shudders over him and dies again  
Under his sovran will.

But this dark tale of violence done  
To Dictynna's consecrate one!  
This wild old tale of passion  
Shaking the seat of the soul's possession!  
How shall I hear it and stand  
Armed to defend the Cretan land  
In the old fearless fashion?

The PRIEST reasons with the People, and then  
exhorts MINOS.

#### PRIEST

His sudden frenzy marks him out possessed:  
How else dare such contempt? Oh, turn,  
Turn, Lord! Smite on the hip  
This dog that snarls at honour! Strike  
This blasphemer! Up, Minos!  
Son of Zeus, stand up!

#### CHORUS

It is well said, it is well said.  
Is Minos a King for nought?

[MINOS stands forward, now again master of himself.

Fast for ever, chosen of Zeus!  
 Son of the Bull, fast for ever!  
 Lord of Crete and the Islands, Son of the  
 Bull!

What, are my eyes so dim,  
 Is their light gone out?  
 Is a God come, dreadful . . . ?

[The People falter and stay, as MINOS begins to speak.

### MINOS

Neither denying, nor grudging  
 Thy full requital of blood;  
 Excusing not, nor accusing;  
 Making no haste to slay,  
 Neither to save thee, I give thee  
 All thy desire. Take up now  
 In battle thy blood-feud. Not vain  
 My Kingship, nor yet in vain  
 The lineage of Zeus, and my lineage  
 Shining within my Son.  
 Behold, I wager my Son,  
 Androgeos.

The People murmur. DAEDALUS starts and looks  
 at MINOS.

### HUNTSMAN

I am content.  
 Yet if thy son fight  
 This battle of thine, he dies—

And the Bull's Blood be out,  
As it was foretold.

CHORUS

The Bull's Blood! O thou fool!  
Knowest thou thy saying? O fool!

DAEDALUS

Let not my Lord say so, let him heed.  
Androgeos hath no charm'd life.

MINOS

Daedalus, tempt me not further,  
Seeing thou diest.

DAEDALUS

Let me die  
Speedily, that I see not  
That which must come to pass.  
Dying, I pray the King  
Wager not here his son.

MINOS

How not?

DAEDALUS

Lest the Oracle  
Be sooth, and his son win  
A wreath of blood, and himself  
A crown of pain.

[MINOS stands in doubt, seeing the man's eagerness.

CHORUS

The whole is not yet told—  
The King draweth his breath  
With labour between his teeth;  
But the slave is bold, the Avenger bold.

MINOS comes down from his throne and takes  
DAEDALUS apart.

MINOS

Thou hast a darker message,  
Not yet told. Now tell it.

DAEDALUS

It is revealed, a wrong  
Was done to this man's kindred.

MINOS

Fever, belike, in the blood,  
Unsubjugate, might sting  
Desire.

## DAEDALUS

Ah, desire! Wild heat  
In the blood. Heed the Oracle.

## MINOS

The Bull's Blood! What is this?  
Speak, be swift.

## DAEDALUS

O King,  
The bullish blood is not out,  
Nor a bull from the sea redeems us. There  
needs  
A cut more deep. Earth shall age  
Or e'er th' intolerable load  
Of the flesh be cast. Ours the blood  
Wherewith we drug us the spirit,  
Clog up with lime his wings,  
Daub him the eyes. O vile,  
Servitude base, to achieve  
Lust, and devise new lust!  
How shall it cease till we cease?

## MINOS

Thou bold in words,  
Thou spinner of webs,  
How shalt thou mesh me? What bull's  
blood

Have I, save the strain  
Immortal of Zeus,  
That made glorious my mother  
And made Crete glorious?  
Am I not Son of the Bull?

DAEDALUS (fiercely)

Thou knowest, thou sayest.  
What Bull's Blood is there but thine?  
The Goddess foretold it.

[MINOS reels, then strikes down DAEDALUS.]

MINOS

I have the power to slay thee where thou  
liest.  
Anger me not, lest I stretch  
My hand out, and death come down.

DAEDALUS

Death and I, wrestlers, stand  
At grips, and I read his eyes  
In the hush of pause. Listen, I read  
Thy fate, O Minos, in them.

PRIEST

Read thou thine own, and shift  
A way from thy trap, Daedalus.

## DAEDALUS

To no man is it given to read his fate  
Lest, aping God, he strain law's majesty  
Which may not set back Doom once fixt.  
But at death's point he does foreclose  
A partnership, and shares Death's great  
    design  
Ere yet accepted.

    Fate, like a sea,  
Rises and falls, the same  
In difference, immutable. Is there a man  
Whose veins the ichor of God  
May bear, and not madden, and die  
Frenzy-bit? Or can a man  
Stand undazzled such light  
As rayeth streaming from God?  
Can a man, being God, bear with men—  
Having God's mast'ry, his haste,  
Dreadful splendour ashake on his front—  
His motions, his white light,  
Unageing youth in old flesh  
Weary of sin? O never  
Hope that consummation, Minos!  
Be man, be God—but not both.  
That is denied thee.

[He half rises up, strengthened by his gospel.

Nay, thou unhappy, thou God encaged,  
Thou wretched mortal maddened by God  
If thou art God enough for our ruin,



Enough of man to clog thy forehead with  
 shame,  
 How shall the God in thy seed  
 Battle thy sin for thee, man?

[He looks about him despairingly, then sinks down.

It shall not be. Thou saidst well,  
 Goddess. Woe upon woe  
 Till the Bull's Blood be out—  
 His, this God among men and man among  
 Gods.

[He points the last words at KING MINOS.

CHORUS (horror-struck)

Gods, Guardians of the earth!  
 And ye, O nameless Ladies of Dread!  
 Let not the head  
 Bow down to the terrible words he said,  
 Nor accept the monstrous rede.

[They exclaim upon DAEDALUS.

O art thou shameless, wretch?  
 Hast thou no knee to bend,  
 Will thou slander thy friend?

MINOS

He slandereth God my father;  
 He condemneth himself.

Yet I can pause  
Before I slay thee. Tell now  
Thy warrant for this thou utterest.

DAEDALUS

This is revealed—it shall come to pass  
Ere my tired heart sigheth free my breath,  
Thy son shall seek him a grave  
And funeral rites in vain.

[All are hushed in fear. Then the People pray.]

CHORUS

Sea, and our Earth!  
O well-loved Earth, do thou be clement,  
And thou, O Sea, whose heart is Crete,  
Bear thou the young man home  
To his father's halls!

[MINOS has recovered himself.]

MINOS (to Daedalus)

Thou hast o'er-reached—like a stoat  
Biting the trap-teeth that clutch him.  
My son is King Ægeus' guest  
In Athens, seeking her Olive Crown,  
Sunned 'neath her golden arts.  
For his high head awaiteth  
No shameful end in unconsecrate death—

Him rather Fame like a mantle  
Binds to be one with Honour and Us.

[He turns to the HUNTSMAN.

Comfort thee, seeker of blood-price.

HUNTSMAN

Let blood be paid for the price of blood.  
I ask the full, fair price.

CHORUS

The price of the strong! Minos is strong,  
Strong as a tower his House!

Rumour without. The PRIEST exclaims, pointing  
with his hand.

PRIEST

Look yonder! The people!

[All look. The CHORUS voice the general agitation.

CHORUS

See, see, a moving crowd,  
A vext concourse, a multitude  
Spreads from the shore with faces turned  
To greet the flags of the King!

And lo, in the hiving midst,  
One breathless, sorely spent,  
Struggling with friends, on this hand, on  
that,  
Stain'd with travel—yet proud content  
Lighteth his brows, flames from his happy  
eyes—  
News, Minos, good news!

A MESSENGER enters with following. The stage fills.  
He kneels to MINOS.

#### MESSENGER

News, Minos, is mine!  
The race, the race, the swift steeds,  
Glory of Phaestos! The deeds  
Of Androgeos! Wine—I crave wine,  
That I pour libation to all Patrons of Crete!

#### CHORUS

O ministry of thy feet  
Jocund! O augury  
Of great and high Destiny!  
Minos, the cup is full!

#### MINOS

Not in vain didst thou rear the House of  
the Bull,  
Zeus my father! Not vain

My quest of Helios, parent of light,<sup>1</sup>  
 Lord of the light that shone in the flame of  
 thy head,  
 Pasiphaë, queen and wife,  
 Mother of children, blest in thy children's  
 life!

[As he names PASIPHAË there is a sudden hush.

CHORUS

Pasiphaë! where is she?  
 Minotaur ravens—O King, have mercy!

[The PRIEST intervenes.

PRIEST

Praise we the Gods!

[MINOS in ecstasy of pride.

MINOS

The Gods! I am a God—  
 Son of all-seeing Zeus! See to him, there—  
 Give him meat and drink—anoint his feet  
 With wine and oil; heap a shield  
 With golden treasure; let flocks,  
 Fatlings and firstlings be his.  
 Let his name be glorious, call him

<sup>1</sup> Father also of Pasiphaë

Augur of Minos; let his place be set  
High at our table, who hailed our son  
Olive-crowned, Victor!

[He turns fiercely to DAEDALUS.

Ho, thou

Ill mist, scowling upon us,  
Darkener of days, thou boaster!  
Gird, twist thy fork, scorpion!  
Lo, the World-Disposer,  
Disposing of thee, maketh sport  
Of thee and thy mumblings there.

Zeus, like a fresh wave,  
Brimmeth the harbour bar,  
So the dead water, stirring,  
Feeleth his might and swims  
To th' extreme verge, and life springs  
And motion where first was scum.

Too soon, Daedalus, thy claw  
Put out, to rake in the heart  
Of Crete! Ah, Attic fox,  
Whose eyes shifted and turned,  
Devising snares—now hide  
In deeper maze thy disaster.

Feed now the jaws thou wouldst feed  
With Crete! Ha, be done with him!  
Hale him to Minotaur!

[They seize DAEDALUS, and hold him.

DAEDALUS

O Minos, I am ready. Do thy will.

A state of exaltation in MINOS infects PRIEST and People.

MINOS

As the judgment of Zeus  
Is my judgment; let none  
Question or raise finger up—  
Till he drink of the cup  
Himself hath mixt,  
And his doom be done.

PRIEST

Ah, faced as a fox,  
Ah, heart of a sheep!  
Behold now the fowler  
Caught in his net;  
The jester's dry eyes  
Aching to weep.

CHORUS

The fall of his pride  
Is as Phaëton's.  
He sailed far and wide,  
His wings were the sun's.  
But his cunning belied him,  
His art was denied him,  
And his sand-glass runs.

## DAEDALUS

As the striver washt clean  
Of blood and sweat;  
As the bridegroom whose fret  
Is o'er, and the bride-chamber set  
As washt in Callirrhoë's runnel,  
Let the Bride not delay—  
Even Koré the Queen.

[DAEDALUS is led out by guards.

## PRIEST (as Daedalus goes)

Doth fear gripe thee, wretch?  
Art thou little at ease?  
Doth thy nostril 'gin twitch,  
Dost thou shake at the knees?  
Lo, the King armed with dominion  
Hath struck. Zeus remembers his minion.

## CHORUS (more thoughtful)

Tho' I shudder his name,  
Yet must I pity  
The vials of shame  
He endureth, whose city<sup>1</sup>  
Wears the helmet of fame.

[MINOS cries out in triumph.

<sup>1</sup> Athens, of course.



## MINOS

Make now a feast to the Gods, heap high  
The altar-floors! Now let the priests  
Whet their blades, let the victims  
Smoke on the hundred altars!  
Let music shrill—let the strings  
Shrill like the wind, and thrill  
Our hearts. I, Minos, make  
Thank-offering to the Graces!  
Ho, bring the blossoming crown,  
Crown me ministrant! Flute-players,  
Wind your high music higher,  
Make keening melody! Kindle  
Fire upon Ida's brow!

A shadow falls over the city and MINOS falters suddenly.

What now? Why doth the music  
Fade? Who hideth the sun?  
Who cometh? Who cometh now?

## CHORUS

Who is this, haggard and wan?  
Who cometh with jaded and weary feet?

A second MESSENGER stumbles in, and drops at the feet of MINOS.

Who art thou, shadow of sorrow?

## SECOND MESSENGER

Minos, have mercy, have mercy!

MINOS (still exalted)

Mercy is mine to bestow. What is thy  
need?

## MESSENGER

My need is thine, and this people's, and  
hers—

The flame-circled Lady, Pasiphaë, Child of  
the Sun-God.

As before, at PASIPHAË's name there is a movement  
in the crowd.

## CHORUS

Pasiphaë—where is she?

Lady of terror, and burning and fierce  
meditation,

Crisping, uncrisping her hands!

[MINOS is still blind in his pride.]

## MINOS

Stress and anguish are gone. Crete is great,  
Free, favoured of Heaven, proud  
Of my son!

MESSENGER

Woe for her burden! Woe too for me!

He looks about him at the people with flowers in their hands, brought for the thanksgiving.

What feast do ye celebrate here?

CHORUS

New praise for Crete, the Crown of the Water!

PRIEST

A new crown for the fruit of the Sun-God's daughter!

MINOS

A new wreath for the brows of the Son of the Bull!

The second MESSENGER takes up authority—his message making him great.

MESSENGER

Cast down your garlands, put away your lutes,

Your reed-pipes and your crowns.

Take dust to crown yourselves, shred off

Your tresses, women; and, ye maids,

Let loose your coiféd hair.

Not for love do it, nor a bridal,  
Save Death be bridegroom. Lo!  
Ready is Death, sitting hereby in the gate,  
Sightless his eyes, fast in hand the dish  
Seeking an obol, seeking his toll.  
Give him his tribute, Minos, and you,  
Crete!

CHORUS (murmuring)

Oh, oh, what is this that he saith?

MINOS

Hush there, and cease your murmuring.  
Speak.

CHORUS

O King, O Daedalus forsook!  
O Queen of the fierce blood!

MINOS

Who speaks of them? The dead are dead.  
Daedalus is dead.

[He turns to the MESSENGER.

Rumour of thee  
Ran on before thy breath could frame it.  
Empty, therefore, thy phial of woe,  
That we may drink it, and live  
Like men thereafter.

## MESSENGER

Sir, the Athenians  
Murmured against thy son,  
And at his triumphs murmured. Then  
When he, begarlanded and anointed,  
Drove home from broad Eleusis  
His conquering team, a throng  
Of youth, their treacherous eyes  
Guarded by linen bands,  
Sprang from a thicket, and set  
On his company, three to a score!  
Critas they slew, Menocles  
With stones, and Androgeos, the young  
man  
Thy son—him they slew and ravaged. Then  
tied  
His feet, thy son's feet, to the car,  
And hued the horses and cried; and they,  
mad  
With fear, went headlong in gallop  
The dust of the track; and by terror  
Made frantic, leapt the rock rampart,  
And fell—  
Horses, and car, and hero,  
To their end in one red grave.  
Now let me die; for no man  
May utter such things and live.

He goes out through a way made by the people, who  
fear him. MINOS stands shaking.

## CHORUS

O King, the tortured soul of Daedalus  
Rises and weeps to see us!

[MINOS stands shaking.

What said that man tormented?  
Spake he not true? Alas!

## PRIEST

The viperous Athenian went  
Deathwards, foretelling wretchedness.

## CHORUS

Woe to the father, woe to the mother!  
Woe to the kindreds of the great House—  
The House, the House of the Bull!  
Ariadne, Phaedra, woe to ye!

MINOS still shaking, GRAULIS appears from the house, sees the horror on all faces and comes quickly down. She peers at MINOS who sees nothing.

## GRAULIS

What is it? What is it? Quickly!

## CHORUS

Knowest thou not? 'Tis Androgeos—

GRAULIS

Dead ?

CHORUS

Dead. Tell thy mistress—

GRAULIS

She needeth no telling, nor heedeth it.  
She is acold, hugging herself.  
O Minos, Minos, King of wretchedness,  
Hear me and strike me down!

[MINOS pays no heed. The People swarm.

CHORUS

Ha, Gods, ye have not ended. The Queen—

GRAULIS

Dead, Cretans, and well dead,  
Seeing this stroke was hers,  
Her scheming—and thy agonizing, lord!

PRIEST

The King stands dumb. What hast thou  
more ?

GRAULIS

She is dead, but her child liveth—

PRIEST

Her child ?

GRAULIS

Her child. Minotaur.

The CHORUS is shocked to silence. Presently it begins on a hushed note, which grows in volume.

CHORUS

Clamour is round me of sin not to be  
named,  
Hissed from shooting and hidden lips;  
Hints, intervals of sound,  
Sobbing, unrest.  
Unrest is worst of all  
When the dread powers of the dark  
Gather, scream and pass over  
As birds on a winter night.  
Shriller than birds in a storm,  
More vacant, more desolately  
Cometh the clamour of sin not to be known!

[With wild hands uplifted.

O haven of Dark, O pluméd night,  
Fall on us, blot our name from the light!

And thou, Pasiphaë!

O woman, wrecked and stained,  
Is there a shame on earth



Thou hast not borne? Or woe  
 Or old inveterate sin  
 Older, more hard than thine?  
 Now no swift hint of love  
 And honourable things  
 Can flush thy shameful cheek,  
 Nor to thy frozen eyes  
 Bring redemption of tears.

She is cut off in sin's flood-tide. The best  
 Were silence, the grave, and rest!

MINOS slowly gathers his force and confronts the  
 HUNTSMAN.

#### MINOS

I am now old, who a little while  
 Ago was hardy, and full of blood.  
 Thou, Stranger, must take thy battle up  
 With me—unequal war.  
 For now I have no son.

#### HUNTSMAN

The price is paid. I ask  
 No more, nor asked so much.

The HUNTSMAN goes out with bent head. MINOS is  
 consumed with the rage of despair.

#### MINOS

There is a price to ask  
 Of Athens, Gods! I am King  
 Of Crete, Minos, the Bull's Son.

Take you a torch, dip it in fire.

One lights a torch. MINOS goes up on the sea-wall and holds the brand out over the sea.

Hear now, ye Cretans! Ye men,  
And young men, soon to be Cretans,  
Ye women, mothers, and all ye virgins  
Who look to bear Cretans! Hear all.

By the blood of my father,  
Zeus, by the altars, the hearth  
Where his shade dwells; by Crete,  
By her hold of th' inviolate sea,  
Athens shall smoke in blood-fray;  
Wailing shall fill her streets,  
But no live thing. A voice  
Shall she be, a wounded voice.

Yea, like a woman tortured,  
Blind and mad, she shall kill  
Her children, and smile at stabbing,  
Then wake, beat her breast, loathe herself.

But still with wet, cruel hands,  
All that she holdeth dear  
She shall slaughter with craft malign,  
Till not one remaineth, but she—  
Moaning, writhing her limbs.

I make war  
Henceforth on Athens, that year  
By bitter year she shall waste  
Her flowers to feed my hate.

By black sails borne they shall come,  
In keels bodeful and black;  
And Minotaur feed, so he  
May prosper in gluttony,  
And we feed with him our hate.

This is the doom of Minos,  
Son of Zeus, testified  
By this torch, and the fire of it,  
Unquenched while Athens stands up.

He stands, the torch shaking in his hand while the  
People pray.

#### CHORUS

Grant, Gods, this doom bear not  
Some fatal, double sense,  
And so our wreck come thence  
Where we had looked to win  
A crown. Alas! man crowned  
Remaineth man, his doom  
Recoileth often to spring  
Back to the doomsman, and he  
That judgeth is convict found!

Who is so wise to know himself, to say  
To his soul, Thus far 'tis safe for thee, seek not  
Beyond thy little hedgéd ground?  
Who knoweth himself bound,  
Or knowing it, accepteth the decree  
Which, when it set man free

Of all else, fixed him slave of his own whim,  
Tyrant whose subjects soon outmastered  
him?

Such wisdom standeth not with the force we  
have:

He only that beareth the brunt of himself is  
brave.

II

ARIADNE IN NAXOS



## THE ARGUMENT

THE hero THESEUS, having (with the help of ARIADNE, daughter of Minos) slain Minotaur and so freed Athens from the yearly tribute exacted by Crete, sails thence for his own city, taking that same ARIADNE with him for his bride. He had promised King Ægeus his father that he would send a ship before him, with a white sail, if he should have been fortunate, instead of the black sail with which the tribute vessel commonly returned. That, however, he forgot to do; so that the ship came in bearing the ensign of misfortune. On his homeward voyage THESEUS stays at Naxos, an island of Magic. The God DIONYSUS speaks the prologue.

## PERSONS

A MAENAD.

DIONYSUS.

CHORUS OF CRETAN MAIDS.

THESEUS.

ARIADNE.

AN ATHENIAN SAILOR.

## THE SCENE

A sandy bight in the shore of the island of Naxos, with the sea at the back. On the right is a grove of plane-trees, in which a stone altar. On the left are rocks and profuse vegetation. The season is the Spring. Flowers abound almost to the water's edge and are to be seen starry beneath the plane-trees. The sky is flawless blue, and the pathway of the sun glitters on the sea.



## ARIADNE IN NAXOS

At the opening of the scene the stage is empty, and so remains for a while. Then there is a flash of lightning out of the clear sky, and immediately a thunder-clap, which, after, rolls among the unseen hills. Three figures are now before the scene, as if proceeding from the altar-grove to a thicket on the left. The first is a MAENAD in short, looped-up tunic, and with streaming hair. Her head is thrown back. She carries a thyrsus in one hand, a dead kid in the other. The central figure is DIONYSUS, crowned with ivy, wearing his leopard-skin. He has the semblance of a smooth-faced, ruddy young man of great stature. Behind him is a FAUN, naked to the waist, goat-legged and footed. He has a pan-pipe in his hand.

### THE MAENAD

Bacchus is lord of the length and breadth of  
the earth,  
Red as wine, brighter than honey, ruthless  
as rain.  
Io! Zagreus! Regent of storm and pain!

[She stands rigid, as in ecstasy.

## DIONYSUS

From my still haunts of brooding and dreams,  
In mortal ceremonies, I come forth  
To light on men, and shed over earth  
With sleepy spell my will inscrutable,  
To this my island, fear-haunted,  
Where priests with pious hands and orgy  
Call up the dance through wintry nights  
And shake the dawn with fire more fierce  
    than the sun's,  
Fire in the heart! Here as a mist  
Desire-laden, sick with torments  
For unused folk, I lie in wait  
Glamour to cast through all quiet ways,  
Through tangle of briar, thro' drencht  
    herbage,  
On sundew thick, on restless floods,  
On scarred mountain-flanks, on the crannies  
    in them,  
Peering for me like eyes.

O'er the mad earth then, through leagues of  
    air,  
I pass to men's dwellings and steep their  
    blood  
With hinted joy and bliss surmised,  
Seasonal raptures, such wild love  
As only in dreams men know with women.  
So like the beasts, filled with me,

Headlong speeding, frenzy-gathered,  
Mouthing they fall, torn by their longing,  
Indiscriminate, prone, possest;  
And my hot breath blows and passes,  
Blows over and passes, and leaves them  
swooning.

For not as the high Gods,  
Not as the great Twelve  
On hoar Olympus throned and pure,  
Am I whose dam, the pale wife,  
Semelé, casting mortal love  
On her fruited womb, cast human tinge  
On me her fruit, with grief acquainted.  
Grief of a God, past human thought,  
Is mine, and Desire, desire of a man  
Shared with that earth whereof she was—  
Bound thereby to desire and pain.  
I am the Earth, its longing, its torment,  
Flood of the spring, summer drouth,  
Fall's foreboding, dearth of winter:  
These am I. Lo! and I move  
Swift in the blood; for in my dreams  
Virgins unsex, men in stress,  
Huddling as herds, run to their woe,  
Till passion dies, and they reach the end of  
desire,  
Boundless oblivion, dreamless sleep.  
So I watch, croucht like a beast,  
At this first shrilling call of the year  
To utter myself, and to be.

Not long—for Theseus, the great captain,  
In triumph turning from perils past—  
From Minotaur sent shaggy with blood  
With his dead to mingle—homing to Athens,  
Wedded with her, the fast-girdled  
Soft Ariadne, loving and loved,  
Calleth here: whom now I await  
In trembling thicket, with eyes agleam,  
To bend her body to work my will;  
Drive my desire to burn in her blood,  
Make of her heart my love's wild garden.  
Press on, press on, abide we the hour!

He bends his head to his breast and points forward with his rod. The procession streams on and disappears. The CHORUS presently come in through the altar-grove: young girls in Cretan garb. They sing the Parabasis, turning their faces as they move round about to where they look for THESEUS to come.

### CHORUS

Not upon us, Athenian, not upon us  
Despair sits darkling, nor sweet Hope  
From us hath folded her away  
While now the Morning, golden-zoned,  
Streams thro' the gateways of the east.  
This is the holy hour, it hath  
Cooling influence of dew,  
Gentle airs, remembered sleep,  
Promise of day renewed!

THESEUS appears, and stands at the edge of the grove, leaning upon his spear. They lift up their hands, hailing him.

Great deeds have I seen,  
Glory hath blinded me  
Till I know not Crete, nor bewail  
The light of my father's house,  
Nor the pleasant pastures of Ida.  
Behold, they are past as a bird's cry in the  
    night,  
Suddenly! Yet I look up  
Trustful, as women trust in the eyes of a man.

When for the sword and the battle  
The murderous beast's ire  
Availed him not; when he fell—  
Minotaur!—and the shout  
Rang thro' the streets, "We are free!  
Crete is free!" Then I knew  
A man was come: and I saw him,  
Theseus, tamer of men, crowned with his  
    deed!

Ariadne, the fair-browed maid,  
Wealth and pleasure of Crete,  
Saw him, how goodly and wise;  
Kneeled, set his foot on her neck,  
Master and lord of her life.  
Bowed her, yielded; and I—  
I too—fell where she fell,  
Claspt his knees where she claspt,  
Past with her to the ship;  
Stood looking steadfast upon him launcht on  
    the deep!

For the Gods, splendid on thrones,  
The far-seeing Gods are his friends:  
Zeus, Poseidon the Girdler,  
Wise Demeter—they stayed him,  
Upheld, threatening the sea.  
Grey-eyed Pallas, the War-Maid,  
Artemis shrill as the wind,  
Phoebus the death-dealer,  
Yea, all the deathless, the Twelve  
Smiled his going forth his fortunate way.

Shall I not serve, being glad,  
Unmindful, Dicté, of thee;  
Forgetting the breathings of Ida  
Whose cypresses hush down the voice?  
Shall I remember the Sisters whiter than  
snow  
Where Cydonia shoulders the sea?  
Nay, but the pastures of Crete and upland  
places  
Are still, hid in death and the dark;  
And I choose for the light thou bearest, tamer  
of men!

[They stand all about THESEUS, adoring.

### THESEUS

Daughters of Minos, pluckt from Crete,  
Chaplet for Athens, or a wreath  
For her smooth brows! me now so near  
My crown the Gods have furthered.

And Athens, not remote  
Nor slow to welcome, ere two suns,  
Shall light your careful eyes,  
Wash pure your tear-worn cheeks  
To redden; for soon our sail  
Blown ripe to round the peak  
Of Salamis shall strain,  
And soon the bankéd oars  
Shall grip the tide, and our hearts  
Inhale the generous air,  
And our eyes the Violet Crown.

Yet seeing 'twas willed in Heaven  
Out of the calm a salient wind  
With moaning music should stir  
The surge against our oars,  
Should fling the prow of the ship  
To seethe his hair in the vast  
Recurring waves, and in foam  
Sluice them, we fled before it  
Hither to Naxos, here to stay us;  
And hence, yest'reen,  
When the long roaring wind had swooned  
And a light breeze ruffled the sea,  
Naucritas sped I, Leucippus,  
With news of our coming, redeemed,  
To Ægeus, King and Father—  
Father of Athens, father of me and the  
people.

Hence now we too shall set  
Sail, and win back our peace  
Ere once more Helios faint.



## CHORUS I

I reckon not Crete, but to win thy land!

## CHORUS II

What land hath a woman but her lord?

## CHORUS III

And who is her lord but he that is strong  
And masterful, even as thou art?

## THESEUS

Fear not at all  
Cold welcome, maidens, fear not at all.

Beneficent the Gods we hallow; there  
Clemency reigneth, and Justice  
Reigneth, and stately Measure,  
High-ordered Temperance, Piety,  
Laborious Peace! For their ends  
I took the shift; Pallas armed me  
And strung me to steel for the grim  
Grapple with Minotaur,  
Seven years a coil for our necks.  
No more: he is fallen, is fallen!  
Our days loom large, without end.

## CHORUS

O come! We delay.



## THESEUS

Nay, first

Smooth Ariadne, offering  
Milk and new-pressed wine,  
From Artemis seeketh her pledge—  
From that pitiful, that benign  
Maid that mothereth babes—  
A pledge of our love's sweet graft,  
Seeing how she is raised  
High above maids, as her worth  
Challenged us, proving it.

## CHORUS

A worthy wife! Worthy of thee!  
'Twas thou felled Minotaur,  
'Twas she gave thee the way.

## THESEUS

The clew was hers that did win me  
Forth from the miry ways  
Of error writhing to err,  
Thickened with drip of mist,  
Fat with the reek of bones  
And fretting members of men.  
Through all the toils devised  
By all-wise Daedalus—  
Trap for his terror, trap for himself—  
She brought me by sweet craft  
And wit; wherefore I praise her.  
I praise her, and crown her mine.

## CHORUS

See, see, she cometh.  
O new-made, fortunate wife!  
O girdle happily loosed!  
O virgin made mother, O bride!

ARIADNE comes gladly from the grove. She is flushed and joyful, and comes to THESEUS with worship. She stands at first looking upon him, her message in her eyes.

## THESEUS

What hast thou? It is well?

## ARIADNE

Well. It is well with me.

## THESEUS

What hast thou, looking upon me?

## ARIADNE

Loving, I look where I love.

## THESEUS

Thou smilest. Thy cheek's fresh rose  
Speaketh.

## ARIADNE

Good augury!

THESEUS

What then?

ARIADNE

My new joy!

My King's gift: for my bosom a jewel,  
For my brows a crown; for thy house  
A son; honour for me.

[She lifts up her arms, glorified. THESEUS clasps her.]

THESEUS

Now praise all Gods for pride  
Of life!

CHORUS

Now serve all Gods!  
Fill altar-cups, strew corn,  
Cast branches. Serve them so.

THESEUS

They look benignantly  
On men who lust on life,  
Who carve their own fate out.

CHORUS

Alas for women! For they  
Lack force for fate.

THESEUS

Look they  
To husband's thews for a sword.

CHORUS

Nay, meekness serves them, and prayer.

THESEUS

Pray then. I stand upright.

[ARIADNE, in his arms, touches his chin.

ARIADNE

Pray yet for thy son, O Theseus.

[He laughs as he kisses her.

THESEUS

Pray thou! My prayer is made  
In sword-stroke and bloody doing  
Wrought for the land, to rid it  
Of plague, clamour, red envy,  
Hatred, malice: I serve  
Men, and so serve God best.

ARIADNE

Some serve by wrath, and some  
By love. Love is humbleness  
And boundless giving. And joy  
Cometh of other joy.

[She quits his arms.

I go to give thanks to God  
For the joy I carry in me.

CHORUS

O excellent in woman  
To bend the knee, yet in spirit  
To outsoar the falcon, mate the blue  
Starry dwelling of Zeus!

THESEUS

Go pay thy service, for ere the sun  
Be at high noon we seek the ship.

ARIADNE

Bending my knees, I am gone.

She goes into the grove. The CHORUS grow thoughtful. Some look anxiously about, some whisper together; all keep within touch. So presently they turn to THESEUS.

CHORUS

Thou prayest not, O hero!

THESEUS

I have prayed by stroke of sword.

CHORUS

Yet a God, they say, dwelleth hereby  
Should have thy worship.

## THESEUS

Thy God!  
Name him. What slim, sleek lad?

## CHORUS I

Hush! For I name him not.

## CHORUS II (whispering)

The Son of Semelé!

## CHORUS III

The Son of blinding Zeus!

## CHORUS IV

Nurtured by wild-eyed nymphs!

## CHORUS V

Nurtured with blood for milk!

## CHORUS I

Bright as wine! Sanguine bright!

## CHORUS II

Him of the gleaming shoulder!

## CHORUS III

Him of the wet skin  
Pluckt reeking from the fawn,  
Clinging about him!

THESEUS

Bacchus!

CHORUS

Hush! For we name him not.

THESEUS

But I name him, O women!  
Shame and deep shame upon ye.

Here is no God for maidens to seek  
To grace the bed for a bridal.  
Seek Pallas rather, the virgin grave,  
Seek rather the Huntress, the Shining One,  
Whom Ariadne now decks with prayer.

Loud praises the Evian hath—but not yours.

CHORUS

Oh, but this murmurous God  
Potency hath and dread!  
Here chiefly to be feared.

## THESEUS

Seek ye the bride, lift with her  
Your arms. Hers climb to the sun.

## CHORUS

Would that thine clomb, O son of Ægeus,  
with hers!

## THESEUS

Nay, let her love work wonders for me!  
For love is mighty, where force not availeth.

## CHORUS

Ay, love is mighty, envied of Gods.

## THESEUS

Well may they grudge! for what have they  
To venture against the dear joy,  
The warm-mouthed welcome of wife and  
child?

## CHORUS

Beware lest they mar that peace,  
From husband's arms snatch wife, from  
mother  
Ravish the babe. Beware, Theseus!



## THESEUS

Quaking hearts, foolish talk—  
Here in this sunlit place!

[He reclines at ease.

After the dust of battle,  
From the puddled earth new-risen,  
Shaking the old turmoil  
From his clotted hair, and the sweat  
From haggard eyes, the hero  
Lies his length, and his head  
Sinks to the fragrant lap of his wife!  
She fills the mead-cup, crowns him  
With flowers, anoints his feet,  
Poureth oil in his wounds,  
With her hands ministereth!  
Who shall deny him? What God?  
I having fought, having prevailed, so crave  
her,  
So claim her, await her. So, even now,  
I could sleep, for in this mild air  
Is sweetness wooing to dreams.

## CHORUS I

I sense the mystery all about—  
Ah, me!

## CHORUS II

Ah, Lord!

## CHORUS III

Who cometh?  
Who stealeth down the wind?

## CHORUS IV

What riot is rife in the air?

## THESEUS

Dimness assaileth me. What is this?  
What thick sense, what languor of limbs?  
What fumes of dropping wine?

## CHORUS V

Virtue like that of hidden wine  
Stealing at dusk from the wine-vat.

[THESEUS rises to his knees in wonder.

## THESEUS

In a day the spring has leaped! It is here!

## CHORUS

Virtue is in him of new wine.

## THESEUS

Ah, but that wine was sweet  
Supt at the bridal! Sweet was the chant

Of them by the wreathed Hermes fast by the  
door!

Frolic the feast was, burning the bride,  
Hiding her shame to be so desired!  
But here is sterner joy—in spilt blood,  
In clash of men, shock of horses,  
In shouting, clamour, pressing of spears!  
Man against man——

[A hush falls. The sun is hidden.

CHORUS

Hush! Hush all! He is here.

THESEUS

Who then?

CHORUS

Our lord.

THESEUS

What lord?

CHORUS

The nameless, many-named.

THESEUS

Then is salvation nearer than at first.

DIONYSUS appears with MAENAD and FAUN. THE-  
SEUS rises, but never looks at him throughout the scene.

## DIONYSUS

Loosed bonds for the encompassed I bring.

## CHORUS

O full of sleep and dreams!

## DIONYSUS

Beneficent my spells upon men,  
Dreams out of wine, panoplied dreams,  
Conquest, empery, ventures wild  
In ruinous places, on high seas  
Unsailed before. Who follows me  
Forsakes wife, children, father's house,  
Enthusiast become,  
Endues the fawnskin, grasps the rod,  
Runs glad the riot. Followest thou me?

## THESEUS (trembling)

Lord, I am plighted, my father awaits.

## DIONYSUS

Know thou no father but mine.

## THESEUS

He forfend! I have plighted troth.

## DIONYSUS

Great deeds are stored for thee—  
Rending of nations, renown in Achaia.

## THESEUS

Ay, I feel it!

## DIONYSUS

For thee  
The shriek of men falling, for thee the spears,  
The shouting, the captives, acclaim. For  
thee  
Hippolyta Queen of scarred Maeotis  
Arrested her fate; thee Heracles,  
Alcmena's son, awaits even now  
To beckon lord of Athens. Yea,  
Adventurous beyond all men,  
To Hades shalt thou go, and see  
Passion-pale Koré, the dead—then come  
To lord it in Athens. Thee, Theseus,  
Athenian King, I urge to thy fate,  
Breathing upon thee thus with my mouth

[He breathes upon THESEUS, who trembles.

Breathing thus again upon thee——

THESEUS shudders and sways, then lifts up with a  
battle cry.

THESEUS

Ho, for the battle! Ho, for the ship!

DIONYSUS

Thus breathing again, and thus.

THESEUS resists no more, but looks doglike, panting at his master.

CHORUS

See, he trembles! Each hot breath  
Flushes him darker, beside himself.

DIONYSUS

I shake thee with my breath.

THESEUS

It encompasseth as a fire,  
Floodeth my temples, beateth  
The balls of my eyes.

[He strides forward, shaking his head.]

CHORUS

Risen great and grim,  
The son of Ægeus looketh  
Wildly upon me, muttering.

DIONYSUS (in a voice like a trumpet)

Theseus, King,  
Girded with war-gear,  
Seeketh his mates  
By the black ships;  
Raiseth the chant,  
The chant of oarsmen;  
Crowdeth sail  
For the open water.

[THESEUS sways about, holding his spear.]

THESEUS

Am I not King?  
Shall I forbear me  
To seize the spear, to cry the battle  
Shrill among men? Let all men know  
Me leader, adventurous,  
Not war-sated, by love not filled,  
Rather in battle seeking my food!

CHORUS

Alas, what wilt thou? Alas for us!  
And for her, the bride!

THESEUS

O thou that settest desire and pain  
To rend a man, by these thy gifts  
Upon me now, hear! By the sword

I draw I renounce my former estate,  
And driven by tempest, mad with the fever  
Gotten of thee, harsh as a squall,  
With no look back, nor thought, I fling me—  
Heading the spearmen stark to havoc.

[The CHORUS impede him.]

### CHORUS

Stay, lord, have pity  
On her thy chosen mate!  
Lo, we are women, daring  
Woman's extreme fate!

### THESEUS

Trouble me not, for the God,  
Giver of fire, is upon me.  
Battle! The sword is out!

### CHORUS

Alas for her, with a bleeding heart,  
Lonely, passioning to her death!

### THESEUS

Athené claims me—brail up the mast—  
Cry you, A Thesus, ho! Battle is joined!  
Bacchus is lord of the earth, God above  
Gods—  
Bacchus!



DIONYSUS

Time is.

THESEUS

Hailing thee thus, I go.

The procession goes forward, THESEUS, with bent head, stumbling before it as if he was driven. The CHORUS in great agitation hold out their arms to him. Presently they see the ship take the sea. Then they tell fiercely the tale after their manner.

CHORUS I

He bared his eyes; with unstaying feet  
For the foam-bitten shore  
He hastened, hounded to fate.  
Soon shall the sails cover the fleet,  
The sea flash to the freight,  
The pulse and thresh of the oars.  
Man born of a woman, winged, outsoars  
The hawk's flight; falleth then and outpours  
His eager estate!

CHORUS II

The Olympian breath'd upon him; the hero,  
    blind,  
Drave where he led  
As a ship whose helmsman is gone.  
Yea, as a ship curst by the wind  
He went out muttering, wan;  
He spake not, turned not his head.

Where is love's chaplet? 'Tis faded, 'tis  
dead!

Woe to the spousals, the desolate bed,  
The heart of stone!

### CHORUS III

Man born of a woman, purposeful, bound,  
Lifteth his eyes  
To the wild splendour of God,  
Dazzled. The earth he loveth, her sound  
Of reed-music, her load  
Of beauty, of ecstasies.  
How shall he dare the terrors, the mysteries,  
The silence, the brooding, the still surprise,  
The awful Abode?

### CHORUS IV

Woman that liveth to trust and to cling,  
Being forsworn,  
Choketh the tears as they start;  
Masketh her passion, traileth her wing  
As a bird, grieveth apart,  
Tearless, voiceless, forlorn.  
Laughter and speech hath she for love; but  
to mourn,  
Sighs, and labouring bosom, and shorn  
Hair, and dead heart.

## CHORUS V

And this is her lot, she boweth her knees,  
Yieldeth her limbs,  
Giveth her candour, her untrodden soul  
Into thy keeping, O Man; for lordship she  
sees  
Throned in thy brows, and control.  
Lit by thy favour she swims  
Sunned in thy smile, rapt in hymns  
Hymeneal, glorious in dreams  
Golden and whole!

## CHORUS VI

Whenas the battle, the lust of war,  
Smell of the sea  
Drive thee abroad, she cannot gainsay  
Thy purpose, O Man, but afar  
Setting her eyes to the day,  
She bendeth her knee.  
Hope against hope! for the God is in thee;  
Blood-fever, the fury that houndeth the free  
Have thee their prey!

## CHORUS

The high Gods drive us whither they will,  
Humble our knees,  
Lure to ruin and sin;  
Whelm us, spurn us, madden and kill;

Crave us belike, net and fasten us in,  
Launch us on desolate seas.  
Power they have to possess, but not to  
    appease  
Desire upon us; power to raven at ease—  
But to love! Ah, no, not so!

## CHORUS I

Love! That is ours. That have we  
From our kind, not Godkind.

## CHORUS II

Ay, we fear God, love man.

## CHORUS III

Alas, sisters, who would love man!  
See where she cometh alone with her joy—  
With mirthful step!

[ARIADNE comes in quickly.]

## ARIADNE

Be glad with me  
O women! and be glad, thou Earth,  
And skyey vault, and amorous clouds  
That hang about the sun! And you,  
Ye birds! O hills, lift up your heads!  
Let all clear streams dance like my heart!

And thou, Maid Artemis,  
Patroness of the pure,  
Come thou to earth and me!

[The CHORUS cry to their Goddess.

CHORUS I

O come, O come, Desirable!

CHORUS II

O Lady, come!

CHORUS III

Succour us now!

CHORUS IV

Pity us now!

CHORUS V

She pitieth none!

CHORUS VI

O hidden Gods, whose name may not be  
spoken,  
This grows a sombre day that opened so  
fair!

## ARIADNE

What mean ye, comrades? What chill  
shade  
Shall pass between my love and me?

## CHORUS I

Fate's way. We smile in our sleep,  
Anon the Furies beat their wings  
Wide, and we weep.

## ARIADNE

Talk ye so to a bride? Talk ye so?

[One points out to sea.]

## CHORUS II

The sail! The Dragon climbeth the sea.

## ARIADNE

Ships pass; and soon shall ours be  
Like snow upon hyacinth.

## CHORUS III

The sky will weep for that snow.

## CHORUS IV

Herald of wailing women.

## CHORUS V

Herald of bruised breasts.

## ARIADNE (sobered)

'Tis true, clouds gather for rain.

## CHORUS VI

Rain! Ay, of tears for love forsworn!

## ARIADNE

Shall I weep? Shall I weep? With my  
hope  
Proud like the swelling wheat?

## CHORUS I

Black with blight is thy goodly grain,  
Widowed art thou, to kindred not yet un-  
veiled.

## ARIADNE

My heart is crying. Heed it not.  
I am trembling. Look not at me.

## CHORUS II

The Dragon drives not alone.

## ARIADNE

Where is Theseus? Where is my lord?

## CHORUS III

The godlike Theseus——

## CHORUS IV

Godlike in this  
That he is stark and cruel——

## CHORUS V

Is gone!  
He is gone—nor ship nor hero for thee.

[A pause of shock.]

## ARIADNE

Heed not my crying, heed not me.  
I am foolish—but speak to me.

## CHORUS VI

A God bent down  
Through the air from his seat on high,  
Hither upon thy lord; and he breathed  
Furious breath on his eyes, and kindled  
A fire in him, which he fanned to flame,  
To leap and encompass his soul, his honour,  
His joy and pity, all the man



He was and might be. So then thy lord,  
Filled with a frenzy, fever of blood-thirst,  
Drave, blundering, out to the ship,  
Stammering "Bacchus! Battle is joined!  
A Theseus, ho!" and rushed to the ship—  
And they pushed out to sea.

## CHORUS III

Nor shalt thou see his eyes again.

## CHORUS IV

Nor he thine in thy son.

[ARIADNE stands as one dazed.]

## ARIADNE

The sun is darkened. Let us too go.

## CHORUS IV

Whither?

## ARIADNE

I know not. My heart aches.

She sits down, stiffly and strangely, as if out of her wits.

## CHORUS

Better by far had death,  
That stooping like a vulture clutcht  
Alcestis to his haunt among the shades

Across the coiling waters, and beneath  
The flowery crust of earth did lay her,  
Wrapt for sacrifice as in long folds  
Of priestly mantle, or golden prayer—  
Better, I say, that thou wert with the dead  
Folded, in expectation of no change.

### CHORUS II

Thou that wast wife, as widow must set to  
the shears  
The flow of thy tresses,  
Cast them a golden shower to the lap of the  
earth;  
Fold in a shroud thy head, thy shell-pink  
ears,  
Hide the crystalline sweet of thy limbs which  
the light caresses,  
Loving thee well; veil thee from sight,  
Black as the raven, black as the heart of the  
storm, black as the night!

[ARIADNE cries over the sea.

### ARIADNE

The dead wind lags, and even now  
All noontide lays her spell on the sea,  
And on Theseus, stretcht his length  
Upon his lionskin, sole on the poop,  
Watching Naxos—and lo!  
Her hills like barrows that mark a grave,  
And love and honour buried there!

What thought hankering bleacheth his hair,  
Feedeth upon his brow? What ruth?  
Sighs he for me, or needs me? Alas!  
Alas, that from the bed  
Of grey Tithonus thou littest, thief,  
To laugh on Crete the day I first lookt  
On him, my moonbeam, maddening me!  
Was ever maid curst so by a man?

Curst! Nay, I was blest  
Beyond all maids born when I knew  
For one hour I was his, he mine!  
Blest beyond reach of Gods,  
Or tearing of fierce Moerae;  
With fire-tinct memories stored,  
Deep as the sea, and as clear—  
To flush my temples, and beat  
In my blood till I die!

Agitation has stolen into the CHORUS, who have become restless, attentive to distant sound.

#### CHORUS

The far-off murmur of wailing, voices intoned,  
Shrilling exultant, sobbing to rest, but anon  
Borne on a gust of wind sudden and fierce,  
Thrust rude on our ears.  
Swooning now, it is gone!  
Yet like the feeble flux of a falling tide  
Cometh the shadow of days bygone  
And the salt savour of tears.

[ARIADNE looks to her lap.

## ARIADNE

O thou dear seed!  
O tender shoot, in whose blood  
Is the streak Erechthean,  
The grain of thy sire!  
Honoured shall I be, harbouring thee,  
Blesséd my breasts that give thee meat!

[The CHORUS are beside themselves.]

## CHORUS

Soon shall be music, high delirium,  
Sobbing music, high procession!  
Life is heavy with fate too big to be borne;  
Fury shall enter, darkness gather possession;  
Dreaming shall follow on woe, for anguish  
remission!

## ARIADNE

What sing ye? What is your song?  
Have ye not that to give me the grace of  
tears?

## CHORUS I (jerking)

I know not. But where hath been  
Dejection, Madness enters the tilth  
New broken, and sows a seed.

## CHORUS II (inspired)

War is on earth of God against God!  
This is the harbourage favoured of one  
Subtly sweet, terribly strong.  
Guard thee the guile of his tongue,  
Beware the cloudy abode  
Of Bromius, wilful and young.

## CHORUS III (wildly)

The God of the flame, the God of the torch!  
The God of Chorus, the vintage, loosing of  
hair,  
Theban Iacchus!

## CHORUS IV

Storm in his eyes!

## CHORUS V

Fire sits eating his eyes, buffets his wing!

## CHORUS VI

Bacchus is King!

## CHORUS I

Even so, come, on the breath of the spring,  
Come, Bacchus, our King!

[ARIADNE rises.]

## ARIADNE

Are ye wise, women, are ye wise?

## CHORUS II

Yea, for my wisdom issues  
Darkly; my lips have words from on high.  
I know he is near.

## CHORUS III

Fear him, fear!

## ARIADNE

Nay, but I fear him not.  
Who stoopeth to strike the stricken?

## CHORUS IV

Belike—O dreamer, O dreamful!  
Belike stooping with words  
Silky as balm, he will lighten thy load.

## CHORUS V

The fawnskin, the thyrsus, O come!  
Hark! Hark!

## CHORUS VI

The winding of flutes—  
Padding feet in rhythmical dance!

## CHORUS I

As herds to the water, advance—  
Come, for Bacchus is near!

[They circle about ARIADNE who stands perplexed.]

## ARIADNE

What is your speech? I know not.  
Whom sing ye so shrilly?

The CHORUS now in wild excitement run about and  
urge one another.

## CHORUS I

Again the riot, the passion, the beating  
Of wings in the void, the rapture, the greeting  
Of shadowy forms and vast!

## CHORUS II

Bacchus!

## CHORUS III

Numbed are the senses, the horror is past!  
Mountain calleth to mountain, deep unto  
deep!

## CHORUS II

Bacchus, O Bacchus!

## CHORUS IV

Sleepers awake! Nymphs of the grove,  
Nereids, reedy and still, shiver and move.  
Your white arms as I move!

## CHORUS V

I feel the God! I am mad with light.

## CHORUS II

Bacchus, Bacchus, Iacchus!

## CHORUS VI

It is thou, it is thou, Giver of Fire!

## CHORUS II

Bacchus, Bacchus, Iacchus!

## CHORUS I

Nymph-beloved, it is thou, the myriad-named,  
Thou, born in Thebae, shameless, unshamed,  
God of the vine, God of the lyre!

## CHORUS II

Bacchus, Bacchus, Evoë!

[DIONYSUS appears with the MAENAD.]



DIONYSUS

Mine, Ariadne, now, by day and by night.

[The CHORUS offer themselves to him madly.

CHORUS I

Lord, I am thine!

CHORUS II

And I!

CHORUS III

And I!

CHORUS IV

Lord, we follow——

CHORUS V

Ah, lord, take me!

ARIADNE

Who art thou, lord?

CHORUS

Bacchus named, lord of the earth!

## DIONYSUS

Hail to the chosen bride!  
Hail to thee, loved and sought by a God,  
Anointed thus with my breath  
Upon bosom and brows, upon mouth and  
    eyes,  
Softer shed than dew on the grass,  
Lighter than gossamer, calling thee hence,  
Ariadne, to follow desire  
Whither I lead.

Speaking, he breathes upon her, bending down over  
her where she kneels.

## CHORUS

We toil in thy track through thicket and  
    hollow,  
Over the rocky steep of the mountain,  
Through the marish and salt lagoon,  
Through bramble and briar, over the dune,  
Through harsh bent grass bitter with wind  
    from the sea.  
Fire aches in our blood, to thrust a way  
    through—  
Ah, we madden, we die!

## DIONYSUS

Mine, mine, O much-beloved!

## ARIADNE

Not thine, not mine, but only his  
Who made me matron suddenly,  
An untried virgin, very young.

## CHORUS

Nay, he hath terrible eyes,  
His force is a force of rain,  
Irresistibly soft,  
Fretting the rock, gnawing the plain  
With furrow deeper than plough in the croft.

## ARIADNE

Shameful your song. Ill it beseems  
Ye drive me, burdened so heavily!  
And thou! Oh, be merciful,  
Take not my grief from me!

Look on me, I am piteous,  
My strength is gone, and my garner of years  
May waste ere the sheaf be added  
Should win me sight of my lord  
In his son. If haply my prayer  
Hath flitted in vacant wind  
About her shrine, or if she,  
My Goddess, holdeth aloof,  
Thou wilt have pity, and leave us  
Hand in hand, grief and I,  
Bosom-mates. Thou that didst grieve

Mortal mother, who died  
Of too clear sight of her joy  
Semele's son, pity thou me,  
Mother and mortal!

## CHORUS

Idle thy prayer! He is here,  
Desirous.

## ARIADNE

If I abate  
Ever so much as the breadth of a hair  
From virgin estate,  
Vow'd to my lord, how shall I dare  
Wash the tears from my body to make me  
fair  
When he calleth me home to be mate?  
Now, Demeter, aid me, and bear  
My feet, slipping to fate!

Ah, lord, thou art great!  
Lore of dark wisdom is thine, thy blood  
Kindles desire for fulness of life.  
I look to thine eyes, as into water, where  
strife  
And clamour lie drowned, and still creatures  
brood,  
Watching the ebb and flow of thy mood:  
Look not so! thine eyes are as wells!

## CHORUS

Lord, that Pentheus the King  
Fought to his wreck and the woe of his  
house;  
That hurled him red to the teeth of his foes—  
Agavé, wife, and old Cadmus, father and  
king,  
Tore, mangled his limbs,  
Driven by thee to the dark, terrible thing:  
Little she deems  
Her end who battles with God!

## ARIADNE

Take off from me the glamour of thine eyes,  
For thus to witch me is pitiful.  
Regard me not—thou'lt kill me!

## DIONYSUS

Mine, mine, by day and night.

## CHORUS

He smileth on her, his mouth is bright,  
Keen as the wind of the north with frosty bite,  
And the burning of frost—  
She reels, faints, and is lost.

## ARIADNE (wailing)

Yea, irredeemably lost  
In the shrouds of thee!

Folded, carried away  
By floe too stealthy and swift.  
Drowning, I care not lift  
Hands, I care not to pray—  
Only I hymn thee, looser of toils,  
Swift Saviour, whom sin and the coils  
Of flesh never gainsay.  
Washt clean in thy waters, I take new birth,  
Hailing thee lord of the length and breadth  
of the earth.

## MAENAD

Dark as wine, ruthless as rain—  
Io, Zagreus, regent of storm and pain!

## DIONYSUS

Come, O thou heavy-laden, behold  
In me all grieving drowned.

## CHORUS

Trembling in all her limbs, but not for fears,  
Rather for lassitude of pain;  
Seeking with eyes all blotted dim with tears  
Her soul's peculiar food;  
Lagging as flower dissipate by rain  
That faints to feel the sun,  
She gathers up her sorrow in a flood  
And heaps it on thee—and the strife is done.

## ARIADNE (to the Maenad)

Let there be mystic dance and procession;  
unbind

My hair that it float on the wind.

Loose ye my girdle, sister, let me go free

For my lord's pleasure of me.

So—I throw my head back, so feel I the  
God

In my veins. The blossoming rod  
Into my hand give ye!

[The MAENAD has now approached her for the rite.

Io, Bacchus, lover of Chorus,

Tragic, dark, inscrutable one!

Rapt lead I the dance, my blood

Leaping to thine. O master of me,

Catch the sob in my throat with a kiss, and  
seal me to thee!

## MAENAD

Io! The lord of lights and glooms goeth on!

They pass out in procession. The CHORUS dance the Bacchic hymn, which varies with each singer. Between each strophe there is dancing, which is heralded by the emotion expressed in the verse.

## CHORUS I

Let us fly to the hills and thyme-haunted  
places,

Revel is on us; he goadeth us on!

Kindle the pine-stem, snatch the thyrsus,  
Lift shrill song  
With wailing of flutes, scream of the pipes:  
Stamp ye your feet  
Rhythmically as the mad drums beat—  
Bacchus, Bacchus, Iacchus! We drift in the  
throng  
Of the lightfoot fauns, nymphs bright-  
breasted and young,  
With hair afloat and giving of tongue—  
We are thy dogs, hounding the day!

[Dance.]

## CHORUS II

Thou that feedest on prayer,  
Worshipt with sobs at Eleusis,  
Where the Mystae fall to their faces,  
Lie with dust on their hair!  
Clear call the priests, wail the priestesses  
Thrilled by thee—thy might  
Fills the vast: they stumble, run to and  
fro  
As drunken, reeling they go  
Whither they know not, astray  
Into the night!

[Dance.]

## CHORUS III

Like as the wounded deer,  
Limping adown the valley,  
Pants for the quiet hidden streams,



Yet stays her not, nor slacks her limbs,  
White fear doth gripe her wholly;  
So labouring we long  
For haven in our pain,  
The patter of the rain,  
The volume of the storm without our  
wattled home!  
So labouring go we on  
Burdened with thee,  
And bruise thy fruit against our lips,  
And let the drips  
Of wine-vats sluice our brows and aching  
sense eclipse.

[Dance.

#### CHORUS IV

Lord of the choric strain,  
Darkly oracular,  
We search thy face in vain,  
Thy lips for any sign  
Or soothful or benign  
Of any solace for our burning scar;  
Seeking thee from afar,  
From howling seas stormy with winter war,  
From where the windy, frozen caverns are,  
We struggle southward in a broken line,  
Swallows wide-scattered, seeking the south—  
And lo! the sun lays bare thy mocking  
mouth!

[Dance.

## CHORUS V

More cruel than women fatal unto men,  
Æaëan Circe or the Ogygian queen,  
Of beauty yet more fell and ruinous!  
Thee when Zeus garnered in his mighty  
    thigh  
He fostered delicate poison, and willed us die  
That hungered. And thy savour maddened  
    us,  
Who kissing thee again found death more  
    piteous.

[Dance.]

## CHORUS VI (pointing)

Break off, for the sun shineth on high,  
And the God returneth  
And all the blue world yearneth  
To the spell of his beaming eye!

Ah, see in what lovely wise  
With soft arms intertwined  
And head to ruddy neck reclined,  
The dream-God leads our dreaming one!  
    Her eyes  
Upward search the fathomless  
Depth unutterable of his—  
Come, let us greet her, glozed with mysteries.

DIONYSUS comes back, with ARIADNE clinging to him,  
embraced with his arm.

## DIONYSUS

Laugh for gladness, O be blithe,  
Open thy lips and give me words  
Comfortable, that thy man might have,  
Whispering utter faithfulness,  
Joy in yielded strength of him.  
Chatter as she whose love is ripe,  
Whose heart and his as petals of flowers  
Cling together, ensheathing so  
That heart they two have conceived as one.  
Speak so to me whom thou hast so loved,  
Drowning in me thy conquered grief—  
Speak, Ariadne, speak, my bride!

[She pores upon his face and clasps him wildly.]

## ARIADNE

Let me see thy face, let me touch thy hair,  
Hold thee in arms—closer, closer!  
Touch me, touch me, love me close—  
Now let thy heart beat attune with mine—  
Kiss me long—ah!

[She releases him.]

No man art thou,  
But God who maketh me faint  
With love that like hungry flame  
Leapeth and licketh my heart,  
And knoweth no rest for fear that it die!

It consumeth me as a feverish night.  
It passeth like fire on the hearth,  
It runneth about, roareth on high,  
Shaketh down ash, raveneth still,  
Mastereth me, giveth no peace—  
Nay, I must die of this love!

DIONYSUS

Love I gave thee—owest thou nothing?

ARIADNE

Whither thou goest, I go.

DIONYSUS

What hast thou yet that I have not?

ARIADNE

Nothing. Thou hast me all.

DIONYSUS

Grudgest thou this our joy?

ARIADNE

Joy? Had I joy of thee?  
Joy? Do I grudge thee such joy?

Nor grudge, nor wish otherwise.  
Thou camest, a flare of light—

Blinded, I fell asleep  
And dreamed of subtle and lovely things.

DIONYSUS

Lovely! And thou so lovely!  
So loved—and so unloving!  
I know what I have won, and what lost.

ARIADNE

Thou hast won all.

DIONYSUS

Thy heart?

ARIADNE

I have no heart. That is dead.

DIONYSUS

God giveth life. As God  
Bent I in love upon thee,  
Pouring my breath like new wine  
Into thy mouth.

ARIADNE

As mortal  
I bowed to immortal God.

## DIONYSUS

Ranked in the clouds, seeing, not seen,  
Carven in beauty, sit the high Gods,  
In a white row, serene and cold;  
Holding each in his hand  
The strings of life and destiny;  
Having their will for law,  
Seeing life as a tale told,  
Far from earth and its quiet recesses.

The dusty orb of the earth,  
Darkling and smouldering,  
Spinning below their sacred zone  
Of pure light, hangeth and swingeth  
Barred from doom by Charter, and free  
For sorrow or mirth.  
Thither God bendeth his eyes, to see  
How man to man turneth and clingeth,  
Mate knitteth to mate,  
Maiden to youth, matron to man,  
With love to bind, beget and create  
More, to shun Him and hate,  
Even as they fear!

What hath God to do here?  
Driven by desire, He came down  
To visit the earth He had made,  
Clothed in lightning and majesty,  
Beamed in white ethereal fire,  
On the wind enthroned. Man was afraid

And hid, and called upon his desire  
To hide in his bosom. Then God grew  
wrath

With the world. He drave  
With a sword man out of his path;  
But the closer man clave  
To his smooth counterpart,  
Loving even the grave,  
Where she lay hid, more than God's heart.  
Love starved now, God gloometh apart,  
Too high for love, and removed too far,  
Bound by his own decree,  
Absolute King, alone—  
Misjudged, hard - judging, powerless in  
potency!

[He turns to ARIADNE holding out his hands.

O thou woman beloved!  
Who hast known me, had of me  
More than of man thou couldst ever—  
Thou who hast given me  
What save to God thou couldst never!  
See now, imploring,  
Urging thy heart,  
I, God, stoop  
To thy knees, thy lover!  
I, God, at thy knees—  
Stooping immortal—I, incorruptible,  
Stooping to thee, corruptible!

What sayest thou?

ARIADNE (in a low voice)

Whither thou callest go I.

DIONYSUS

Dazed and stricken thou doggest my heels.

ARIADNE

So I must follow or die.

CHORUS

A bitter ending! Fate like a hound  
Snuffing the track of the doomed one.

ARIADNE

Fate's wings quicken.

DIONYSUS

Fate driveth us both,  
Both to the end appointed.

[He cries to her.

O woman!

O woman, give me thine heart!  
Give me the whole, for lacking it,  
I hold thee phantomwise,  
Nor touched thee when compelling. Thy  
heart,  
Woman, thy heart! Take back thy kisses,



Take back thy lips, withdraw thine arms  
That clung and cradled me!  
Thy heart! Canst thou not understand  
How God must spurn all flesh that hath not  
soul,  
Yet weary of soul unwarmed by flesh,  
And anguish in his realm for mortal love!

[He is very near her, but she holds him off.]

### ARIADNE

Touch me not again, for I have sinned:  
Dark days are come.  
Sin being done, I know where 'tis paid,  
The debtor ruthless, the debt acknowledge.  
For I was delicate, being with child.  
Therefore I die.

[The CHORUS in great desolation.]

### CHORUS

Must we die, Dionysus?  
Dost thou leave us, O God, in our misery?

### DIONYSUS

Ariadne, stay thou patient for me.  
I go to Artemis. She will hear.

In Delos, in the sacred sea,  
Of virgin harbours, shores untrod,

Unsoiled and flawless as her birth,  
Where Leto lightened of her load,  
And never woman hath dared lie-in,  
Nor dog set foot—in Delos holy  
Among the trees that bear no fruit,  
Aisles of plane, birchen groves,  
Ilex deep, there sober-lipt  
Artemis sister of high Apollo  
Has pure worship. Thither now I  
Will urge with pity, anon return  
To my love—to my love.

## ARIADNE

Lord, leave me not!  
This place is full of voices.

[DIONYSUS vanishes as she speaks.]

## CHORUS I

Gone! He was, and is not.  
This was a God.

[The scene darkens.]

## CHORUS II

With him the light is gone.

ARIADNE, in deep dejection, has sunk to the ground  
and buried her face in her knees. The CHORUS murmur  
their despair.

## CHORUS

Where is there peace,  
Or where the land unstruck by God?  
Where shall the wounded fly,  
Or in what covert lie  
Unvisited by his rod?

There is no peace at all!  
Our robe of beauty is a pestilent blight,  
God-given in our despite  
And set like a gilded pall  
To cover leanness, and hide corruption out of  
sight!

[One points seaward and cries out.

## CHORUS I

Succour from the sea!

## CHORUS II

Or spite  
More snarling.

## CHORUS III

As a gathered squall  
Drives o'er the azure of the main  
And with his mantle enwrappeth ships,  
Now cometh with hasty steps  
A stranger to bless or ban.

## CHORUS IV

His eyes are haggard with fear.

## CHORUS V

It filleth the air I breathe.

## CHORUS VI

Hush! Speak him fair.

Hush! Lest he hear.

[An Athenian SAILOR enters the scene. He salutes  
ARIADNE.

## SAILOR

Hail thou, that dost raise thy head  
Above thy women, as queen of them.

## ARIADNE

We greet you fairly, with service due—  
Washing of feet, clean raiment, bread  
And wine; then help with your burden of  
speech.

## SAILOR

No help for that, lady, that you can give.

## ARIADNE

Rest here, then speed the better.

SAILOR

Like a ship before the wind  
I drive before shrilling fear.

ARIADNE

Make this your haven, O friend.

SAILOR

My haven! I have but one.  
I seek him here.

CHORUS

Seek whom?

SAILOR

Heavy with news I seek  
The son of Ægeus.

ARIADNE

Aha!

My Lady Hymnia, thou strikest?  
Hast thou me? Hast thou me?  
Is thine arrow notched?

SAILOR

What pain  
Wrings her to this grief?

## CHORUS

Thou crownest her sorrow.  
Thou seekest her master and lord,  
Who late abode with us, and then sailed  
In a swift ship for the outland.

## SAILOR

The King is gone?

## CHORUS

A king's son  
Went he out.

## SAILOR

Whither away?

## CHORUS

I know not. Hounded he went  
By a God that breathed in him fever  
And fury and thirst for blood.

## SAILOR

Double woe!

## CHORUS

Tell thy tidings.

## SAILOR

The yearly tribute we owed to Crete,  
Which like an issue drained our manhood  
And left us poorer and yet more wan,  
Was floated on our sighing  
Its full three moons of anguish tense;  
Yet never answering sail hove up,  
Or black as winter, or white as flowers  
That foam the uplands in spring.

For one or other waited Athens,  
Seeing that Theseus, grieving for her,  
Himself the goodliest, himself did offer  
To staunch that wound. And thus he left it,  
That if he prospered, home to us  
Speedy would come, whose white sails  
Should flash our joy; but if harsh fate  
Adjudged him dead, his mourning ship  
Should cloud the day with a black sail,  
Black as our hopes. Such pact he made.

Now when so long a time was past  
Rayless, the King, fear gnawing him,  
Strenuous in prayer, himself the priest,  
Long files of oxen, files of goats  
Slaughtered daily, and sluiced the altars,  
And after tottered, drunk with his fear,  
To where the citadel, white to sea,  
Breasts the liquid wonder of blue.—  
There king Ægeus, the old, the venerable,  
Winter-white, daily stood

Among the elders, older than any,  
And saw the dawn redden and fire,  
The sun rise burning out of the sea;  
Saw him anon swim over Athens,  
Drowsing among her sleeping hills;  
Watched and waited; then saw him slope,  
Clothe with purple the bosomed hills,  
And violet night steal down, with stars  
Gemmed in her curtains, and the young moon  
Stare acold on the muffled sea,  
Wonderfully still. Waxt she and waned,  
And new days broke; then a new moon  
Silvered the frosty girdle of earth:  
Then an ominous day.

Stood up before the altar King Ægeus,  
Poured wine upon earth, oil upon wood,  
Set to the torch; the sullen wood  
Hissed like a tangle of snakes, and died.  
So the Gods knew not, smelt not, nor felt  
The thigh-smoke, nor their nostrils with  
    blood-reek  
Were filled that day—for ere new flame  
Caught the wood, one came and knelt  
And cried to the king, The ship is here!  
We went, he, Ægeus, blenching for fear,  
Winter-white, and took up station  
On the sea-ward wall. He bared his eyes,  
Wandering and blue, to sea; and each  
Bared eyes and lookt, and lo! as a cloud  
Besmircht, black on a flawless sea,



Out some ten cable swayed a ship,  
Black as death's jaws, and flapping heavily,  
Dragging the mast, a soot-black sail.

He gave no cry, nor wailed at all,  
But stretcht his arms out unto the ship  
As clamouring what it bore; so straining,  
Fell piteous down to ruin and death  
Over the sheer, and all his blood,  
His golden blood, pock-markt the earth.  
Thus in his full of days died he,  
Old Ægeus, and Athens mourned him long,  
As kinsfolk mourn housefather and lord.  
But when with oar-thresh came that ship  
To land, our woe was rent by laughing  
For news of Theseus at hand! who'd sent  
Swift heralds of grace; but in his joy  
Made mad, let slip the promise given  
Of message by sail of white or black,  
So all this dule had wrought his people  
And worship quicker than he could covet  
On him, on Athens and her men.  
Whom yet, with vow to break no bread,  
Nor clip my locks, nor anoint my body,  
Seeking, I climb the unageing sea.

#### CHORUS

Seek him not here; here is no room  
For hope or joy to have dominion.  
For he is gone, and left his troth

A shredded rag on a bush of thorns,  
To rot in air.

SAILOR

Went the king out  
With all his pomp, with his bride and her  
maids?

CHORUS

The King went alone in the keen ship.

SAILOR

But swift returning will claim the bride.

CHORUS

Nay, surely. A God constrained him  
To what (in men) were knavish work.

SAILOR

Under what God then, went he?

CHORUS

Even Dionysus, the young, the wild,  
Whose breath tormented all his force  
So that he twisted under the stress of it,  
And muttering murder, shagged and red,  
Flung whence his honour lay moaning.

## SAILOR

Now by that God, by Theban rites,  
And mystic chorus round his altar,  
Some fate hath sealed your eyes, and  
    marred—  
For to me all is clear.

## CHORUS

Declare it.

## SAILOR

O never the Theban men forsaketh  
At this their season of sacrifice  
With holy proffer of tragic song,  
Intoned speech and charged dancing;  
Rather, beneficent, full of cheer,  
Wakeful, watchful is he. He therefore,  
Weeping our wretchedness, bare estate,  
Forewarned the hero of instant need;  
But after when, the storm bypast,  
Athens grows ruddy, smiles thro' tears,  
Him will the cheerful God send out,  
And bring to port with beckoning wind  
The Cretan bride to rule his household  
And share his state. See ye to this,  
That Theseus when he come find love-looks  
And sweet subservience, the wife's good  
    part.

## CHORUS

Thy words are honey, they drop as wine;  
Wisdom inflames them; they shine true!  
O lady, mend your sighing!

## SAILOR

Perverse,  
As one dismayed, with knotted hands  
And hard-rimmed eyes—What is this for  
cheer?

## CHORUS

New hope hath struck too sudden on her.

## SAILOR

This is a wider wound, not healed.

## ARIADNE

Anguish can have no stay,  
Seeing I gave it life,  
Nor cease till I cease. Pain,  
Repentance, sharp reproach:  
A time for dreams, and a time  
For dumb expectance; a time  
For tears that come not—then She,  
The Bright, strikes hasty her stroke.  
Ægeus falleth. One more—

Another victim, from Crete,  
Must pay the forfeit of debt.

O perjured, that could not watch  
One hour! Her eyelight burns!  
There is one end for me.

CHORUS

The end is at hand, and the ship awaits.  
An end in Athens, thy husband's arms.

ARIADNE

I have done evil, a thing of scorn,  
A nameless thing, a thing of shame.  
Pasiphaë taints my body,  
To win me this end.

CHORUS

Alas, grief hath frozen her heart!

SAILOR

Keep high your hearts at least.

CHORUS

Listen her moan.

ARIADNE

Stern law hath Artemis.  
Now in her eyes ruin I read,  
Ruin remediless!

## CHORUS

O madness which we wrought,  
O blind desire possessing!

## ARIADNE

Peace, O ye women, lured  
By craft of mine, and misled  
From sunny Crete, from the shrines  
Of your Gods, from your fathers' halls,  
From the kindled hearths, and streets foun-  
tained and leafy—  
Peace, this evil is mine!  
O pride, now art thou mockt,  
Faith in man's arms! Praise, thou wert  
vain!  
Mockery shoots his lips. The rain  
Beats on the waste, mockery rings on the  
plain,  
Crying, O Fool, O Fool! and O Fool!  
again.

## CHORUS

O breath that her mother gave her!  
O mother's breasts that she sucked!

## ARIADNE

There was no end to my pride.  
The strong lay prone before the light of my  
face—

Treasure for virgin there! I threw it aside.  
Glory in Athens beckoned; I saw the lined  
ships

Thick in port, the shore white with a host  
Of welcoming faces; songs on all lips,  
Flowers in all hands, epithalamic; the grace  
Of matron's estate, holy wife, mother holy—  
All, all mine! But I threw them aside.

CHORUS

O leader of virgin chorus,  
Virgin no more!

ARIADNE

Then I was lost!  
Athens was lost, her king snug in my womb,  
My new womb filled with a king—lo! my  
offence  
Greater than any sin under the sun,  
That a mother should barter her child, starve  
her breasts,  
Starve her eyes of the light  
Of eyes that never should see it!  
Where would ye have such a woman tossed?

CHORUS

O love of living! O soul's eclipse!  
Cast her adulteress, perjurer!

## ARIADNE

Hell is the end, the gray  
Whispering vales of the restless dead and  
acold  
Thrill to attend my soul.  
Hades that grim old king  
Fretteth his gnarly hands on the knops of  
his throne,  
Twisteth his mouth awry, and his pale  
Heavy-eyed listless wife, from the uplands of  
Enna  
Ravisht for his delight,  
Feeleth her chill blood stir for my coming in.  
This is my end—how else would ye pay the  
sin?  
Would ye crown with a golden harvest such  
deeds,  
Look for a blossom after the blight?  
Black-hearted, how shall my fruit be white,  
Or how reap figs where ye sow the thistle  
seeds?  
I have no crown, but instead  
Reproach for garment, a shroud  
Of curses thick as the blind snow-cloud:  
Death unhallowed among the happier dead—  
Death for me and the babe I have never fed.

## CHORUS

For end of sin are madness and death,  
Shame, an ungarlanded tomb.



## ARIADNE

This is the end of sorrow, for here  
I lay me down, aching for ease  
Where ease never can be.  
I, the King's daughter, ragged in shame,  
Seeking to hide her name;  
Calling upon the seas  
To fall over her and drown her legend in  
water!  
I, the King's daughter,  
Daughter of Minos, ancient of God, and of  
her  
The burning woman, Pasiphaë, cursing,  
accurst,  
Whose sin Heaven shuddered to hear  
And Hell stood silent. She may never be  
clean.  
She must drag her sin as a chain,  
Show her robe with the crimson stain;  
She must wring her hands, utter her wailing  
cry—  
“I was lovely, I loved, I was false, and I dare  
not die!”  
Let me die, Goddess; less dare I live!

## CHORUS

Ai! Ai! She is beside herself.

## SAILOR

What can the end be but sorrow?

ARIADNE

Tarry ye here—all is not done.

CHORUS

What more for sacrifice?

ARIADNE

There's that to offer the Goddess will have.

CHORUS

Thou hast poured thy libation.

ARIADNE

She had it, but shall have now  
A new libation, a cleaner flame.  
Tarry ye here.

[She goes swiftly into the grove.]

CHORUS

As mist she goeth!

An old saw teacheth, Be not over bold,  
Nor seek too much. Content thee in the  
mean,  
Thou shalt live smoothly. O thou Queen  
Whose warning finger guarding the lip,  
Whose sinewy limbs stript bare for work

Show thee, how hardy, yet withal  
Forearmed with circumspection! Thou  
Couldst teach us whose hot blood  
Springeth, a mounted flood,  
Prompt for all turbulence,  
Fretting at bars, leaping them, rushing on  
To ruin sooner than hold back!

Service is freedom! Chidden reins, locked  
lips,  
Proud high heart, proud bent head, stayed  
word:  
Having these, men were lords of the earth,  
For lordship of all is his who is lord of  
himself.

O proud and patient! O fire of the chaste!  
O flame  
Of loveliness meek and mute! O modestly  
wise!  
O passion of love in bond! O bosom kept  
down  
By folded arms and strait girdle! The Gods  
Have no more lovely, no more delicate  
flower  
In all the hedged garden where God is the  
sun,  
And the flowers God, self-begot of his own  
pure beam!  
Thou that servest and waitest, inherit the  
earth!

## SAILOR

The worst of fortunes be averted!  
Why tarrieth she? What would she there?

## CHORUS

Go thou and seek her. A fear is on me.  
God with a God may strive, air choke  
With pealing battle!

## SAILOR

Ay! for the Theban is doughty, and She,  
The Arcadian, swifter than wind.

## CHORUS

Our little garden plot  
Is wasted with thunder, all the flowers  
Hang black. They die amain.  
So it must be when God wrestles with God.

The powers of darkness and light,  
Powers of Earth and Heaven, powers of sea,  
Strain, lash in tumult of war!  
Sublime above, King Zeus,  
With motionless eyelids, setteth his gaze  
To some quick-burning star  
And lives its life, as He lives ours.  
So throbs in his work the craftsman!

O stranger, go thou, seek for her!  
Seek her, the king's daughter.

He goes without more words. There is a long  
silence. They hear his cry; then pray.

Dorian Crete, whose breathing is prayer,  
And daily task a sacrifice;  
Whose acts are thanksgiving of the thought;  
O Crete, where Heaven's lord,  
The Thunderer, nodding o'er the world,  
Lay for a space, gathering the threads  
Of all his lordship—Dorian Crete!  
I weep for thee, I know the word  
Is past that never these eyes shall see thee.  
O Crete, in this hour I weep for thee!

[They see the SAILOR coming through the trees.

Ah! thus her peace is made. Sisters,  
This is the end.

[He comes in carrying the body of ARIADNE.

#### SAILOR

Peace! for ye stand  
Facing the dead, in this gentle thing.  
So! shroud ye, lift your dirge. So, life!  
So, breath, that scarce grew thinner for thee!  
So, light, that grew the gladder!  
Life, breath and light together  
Quenched and drowned, quenched and  
drowned!

## CHORUS

Ai! Ai! my joy, my darling one!  
O niggard fate of thine!

## SAILOR

This is so piteous, even God,  
I think, would stoop and sorrow.

## CHORUS

God rideth his wild way,  
Whose onset may be trackt  
By wringing hands, by hopeless eyes!

## SAILOR

Power goeth in God; Love hath no place,  
But only majesty, iron law,  
That cove to subservience—so here,  
What can ye do, poor women?

## CHORUS

Know  
Our children happy, being less than God,  
In that they cannot wreak such woe.  
Let God be mighty; but let man love!  
And loving, be happy in spite of God.

They compose her for burial, close her eyes, cover  
her face; then lay her in the midst.

Our meagre life affords  
A time to sin, for tears a little time;  
Thereafter, when the mower whets his scythe,  
We do confess ourselves to be as grass  
And bow us down to the sward.  
Yet who shall put unhappiness in this,  
Or who, when so much travail hangs thereby,  
Crave an immortal home?  
For while we live we love, and, loved,  
Hold life a sceptred fee.  
But the Gods love not, neither die, so live  
Wretchedly, not as we!  
O sterile Gods, banned by their own disdain,  
Almighty, vacantly great,  
Starved, pitiless, unpitied, feared and  
shunned!

How shall man dream or how declare  
The chill remoteness of God?  
Who may envy Him the dearth  
And silence of His abode?  
Love is light of our darling earth—  
But bleak His kingdom and bare.  
Where man goeth lowly in his mirth,  
Loveless and sunless goeth God.





III

THE DEATH OF HIPPOLYTUS



## THE ARGUMENT

KING MINOS, driven from Crete, seeks refuge from tempest in Sicily, the realm of Cocalus his enemy. At the same hour comes HIPPOLYTUS, son to Theseus and Antiope, driven into exile by the thwarted desires, now turned to hate, of his stepmother PHAEDRA, MINOS' daughter and last of the great House. She, too, half-repenting, is come to win him back if she may. Thus MINOS and Theseus, Crete and Athens, meet once more in their children.

## PERSONS

MINOS KING OF CRETE.

CHORUS OF CRETAN PRIESTS.

ARTEMIS.

PHAEDRA.

HIPPOLYTUS.

A MESSENGER.

## THE SCENE

A rocky coast, near Agrigentum; a cliff looking over the sea. On either hand a steep path leads down to the sea-beach. The time is afternoon of a winter's day. The sky is clouded, and a fitful wind makes the sea unrestful. The waves break upon the beach. The sound of them is heard throughout the action, now furious, now lulled.

## THE DEATH OF HIPPOLYTUS

MINOS speaks the Prologue. He is figured as an old man in black robes. His beard is long and grey. He walks with a staff.

### MINOS

Darkness gathers, and boding of storm  
Upon my ways; unfriended I go  
In a waste land, full of eyes watching,  
Of foemen ambushed, beset by the sea,  
Barred and bastioned by the high rocks  
Whereout looketh no issue benign  
To herald peace, with gleam like a shaft  
Of amber, low in the sky in winter.  
Shock upon shock, the sea's wild armies  
Throb at the cliffs; and I stand here  
An old man exiled, lost to honour,  
Power or the homage of the just—  
I, who was Minos, the friend of Zeus.

The just know me no more, nor have  
known  
Since Anger held me, and Malice and Clamour,  
Snarling tenants, entered me in  
And bayed me mad, that I bit at Crete;

And she, putting up both her hands,  
Feared and shrank: then great in vain!  
I, friend of Zeus, was great in vain!

They smelt the spoil from afar. The  
Achaian,  
Hungry Megara and her hordes  
Flocked like birds that search the watery  
leagues  
For wrack; and the fickle sea,  
Once a broad cincture to hold us inviolable,  
Staying, bowing herself before us,  
Forbad them not. As a dark cloud  
Of evil birds, attendant on death, they  
gathered,  
Watching sideways, eyeing us up and down,  
Blinking, waiting the death-grapple  
Of Crete and me, till Zeus should yield me;  
Which done, they hovered, settled, and  
feasted long.

So sagged, so fell the goodly tower  
Of all my honour. Renowned Crete,  
Dorian Crete, whereof I was,  
The which I was, cast me out  
Empty-handed, and stood to see,  
With estranged eyes, vacantly, how I past  
Bent to my yoke of shame; so we took  
Ship, and the sea looked wildly, and bared  
Defiant teeth which hissed upon us  
Three days, three nights of fitful weather—

Veering winds, countering currents, and  
snaps

Of flying foam, cold in our faces;  
And then a lull, and a stupor of calm.

Anon sang in the shrouds a great wind,  
And Heaven was black, and the mews rested  
not,

Wailing, drifting about us. The storm  
Leapt sudden upon us, rain in the van,  
Driven as mist. A howling wind  
Tore up the sea; the sea in torment  
Writhed in that clutch, and bare for birth  
Mountainous water, swift ruin,  
A swerving death-floe, a smooth pit  
Wherein lay ravening death, with fear  
Cresting the wave's wild head. I saw  
The lightning flare to the rim of the water  
And bodying clamour, lap in one sheet  
Of flame the world. Therein we drave  
Two days, two nights, numb to the heart,  
With eyeballs frozen, rigid hands,  
Blencht, horrible lips, and made this coast  
Spied through the flitting rain, this coast  
Of low grey shore thundering in surf,  
Wet rocks, a line of wind-bent trees,  
A long white shelf of beaten water,  
Wherein a haven; wherein we dropt  
Panting. But Zeus the unrelenting  
Turned now the other edge of his blade  
To score our hearts; for what the sea  
Had hungered in vain, Cocalus, the King

Of this waste land, grudged, and drew sword  
To front me, King and Hero, and to prevail.

The CHORUS of Priests, robed in grey, has entered the scene, has built a rude altar of stones and lit a fire upon it. And now they walk round about it, invoking the Genius of the land.

### CHORUS

As to a mountain holy,  
Peaked in blue trembling air,  
Anointed by the glory of the sun,  
Faltering and slowly  
I lift my aching eyes  
To this vague land that lies  
As a proud Queen to see her day-work done,  
Breasting the southern glamour, and slaves  
the north  
To fan the tresses of her heavy hair,  
And with her stretcht-out hands draws east  
and west in one.

For rest I search thine eyes,  
For rest I heed thy voice  
Calling among the water-brooks of easeful  
things.  
Cool are the winnowings  
And full of solace when the sun-glare dies  
The play of thy great wings  
Across the thick of dusk with hidden noise.  
So on the heart of night,



Beneath thy serious eyes,  
 Wrapt in the silver light  
 About thy head that lies,  
 Lulled by the mysteries  
 And soft low breathings of thy still delight,  
 Let me faint out of strife where sleep is  
 death's surmise.

Surely, now surely succour cometh in,  
 Surely is paid the sin  
 And past the burden of night!  
 For here in milder air  
 The fading day smiles meekly, a kinder death  
 Than threatened us beneath  
 The crave and hunger of the sea.

MINOS

Well may ye lift your hands!  
 For what availeth man before God?

CHORUS

Nothing, O King, in this pass.  
 Swifter than hounds he singleth the wrong.

MINOS

Evil on evil—do I not know?  
 But do the Gods hear?

## CHORUS

Prayer they hear, strained hands they see,  
Smell sacrifice.

## MINOS

Now let them hear  
Me, Minos, in my last throe—  
Me, Minos, dying a king.

He goes to the altar and, taking incense, casts it on  
the fire. A cloud rises.

Artemis, hear me now!  
Thee, chaster than blown flowers,  
Holiest, I invoke.  
By that smooth maid of thine,  
Arethusa, that here in this land  
Kept her raiment unsoiled  
And fled the ravisher, here to hide  
In Ortygian rocks her sinuous grace,  
I cry to thee, Lady of Lakes,  
Lovely upon the Mountains!

If ever sacrifice duly  
Were done in Crete, or piety  
Of offering paid and taken;  
If with the dance, the paeon,  
Or linked chorus of maidens, all  
Robed in the saffron delightful to thee;  
If ever one life, or one death  
Made thee one sin's amends  
Done in heat; if one sire

Held marriage-vow, or one wife  
 Were holy; by honourable youth,  
 By age venerable under thine eyes;  
 By all such deeds and well-doers  
 I claim thy mercy. Not now forsake  
 These thy servants who stand  
 By me in perilous hour.  
 Artemis, hear thou me!

CHORUS

A worthy word of thine, proudly spoken!

MINOS

I know in whom I believe.  
 She, being proud, misliketh not pride.

CHORUS I

I know it!

CHORUS II

Nay, speak low.  
 She whom thou soughtest is here.

The Goddess ARTEMIS appears out of the altar-smoke, clothed in silver, shining to the feet. MINOS covers his face. The CHORUS lift up their hands.

ARTEMIS

Few thanks, O Minos, from me to thee  
 For my fair land blight-bitten, and growth  
 Of weeds, thy planting, on clean tilth,

Or service of honour and sweet breath  
Made foul and unacceptable.  
Herein offending, take thou thy wages.

For what shall profit the song of priests  
Gross to the lips, or incense burned  
On shameful shrines? I, Artemis,  
Delightful in worship of white hands,  
How shall I praise thee who had Pasiphaë  
To wife, Pasiphaë rotten with sin?  
I praise thee not, nor for her sin's brood,  
Minos, be sure; for sin must breed  
A spawn of sin, and she who polluted  
My house with shrieking, sent thine to death.

By thy offending was I offended  
With Crete, my garden; thanks to thy fault  
Never was sacrifice duly done,  
Nor offering paid, nor taken, nor ever  
In dance took I pleasure, or paeon  
Or linkéd chorus. Nor could one life,  
One death make me thy fault's amends—  
For he must pay that runneth the reckoning.  
Therefore no sire, careful of vows,  
Shall salve thee careless; nor Cretan wife  
Holy, make holy Pasiphaë;  
Nor youth be lovely, nor age venerable  
While thine makes clamour to God.

Claim no mercy of mine, Minos,  
But make thee ready. Ariadne, Androgeos  
Paying thy debts, Phaedra remaineth—  
To do what she shall do, to pay what she  
must,

Until in her quench the kindled fire  
Of its own surfeited, flagrant course.

Shall I praise then thy house, Minos?  
I praise it not, nor thank thee.

CHORUS

O fierce and cold! O Lady of Snows!  
Burn us not so with thy frosty eyes!

MINOS

That which is done is done. On my head  
Be what cometh. I stand upright.

CHORUS

Pride is oft-times a shield; but not here.  
In deep waters what shield availeth?

MINOS

A man can see the scope of his eyne,  
Guard the strip of soil that he seeth,  
And guess the morrow — when morrow  
cometh.

CHORUS

The household's father is as a god:  
As the belled sheep leadeth the flock  
followeth.

## MINOS

Your weakness then is my added sin!

[He turns him to the GODDESS.

Hearken, Lady, to him whose quiver  
Is empty, and he left mockworthy!  
Hard have I lived, fought, spent—if well,  
Let Zeus remember; if ill, then Zeus  
Shall trig the balance, and Nemesis  
Raving abroad, cut me down, I saying,  
'Tis well done! But let her be speedy,  
strike

Fair and true. Dally not, Huntress.  
Let Minos the King die in arms. „

## CHORUS

Tempt not God!

## ARTEMIS

This was a man!  
Heed me now, the Bow-Bender,  
Queen of the Winds, the Waters, the Hills,  
The Open Country and quiet places  
That lie pure from the taint of men.  
Because thou goest with fear unacquainted,  
And who will save his life shall lose it,  
And who fling it careless, he shall reap—  
This is my word: there swayeth one life,  
Dear to me, caught in a flood.

Of passion—not his—which if thy House  
     save,  
 That act shall save thee. Yet if it fail,  
 Seeing thou art old, and undimmed thine  
     eye,  
 Take thou this further grace. Thou shalt  
     die,  
 Minos, but die in arms.

Heed well this spoken word, nor think to  
     amend it.  
 A man's sin only himself can shrive.

The image of the GODDESS fades, and the fire dies  
 down.

### CHORUS

Mystery! The King is alone,  
 A stranger treading a strange land.  
 No son remains to him, none of his line  
 But Phaedra, queening in Athens. And she,  
 What shall she do, in a strange land?

[MINOS sits and broods.

In the dim fields of time,  
 Ere yet were cities in Crete  
 To blossom their hundredfold;  
 Or when as yet were not the stablisht towns,  
 Cnossus nor Gortyna;  
 Nor yet to the Twelve Gods given  
 The soothful homage of rhyme—

Squarely stood upon earth, rafted with  
goodly beams,  
The house that Minos the King  
Reared for his high-got race,  
Sprung from Zeus that sendeth the thunder  
down!

Fair was the hall for guests, the greeting they  
gave  
Fair, and the sending, how it was blithe and  
brave!

Sing now the deeds of the Bull<sup>1</sup>  
That bore Agenor's meek daughter  
On the sheer bulk of his strength  
To the chalk cliff in the dark blue water!  
Pasturing Phaestos was glad, and sang  
The hills at the wondrous birth  
Of the sons of the son of Cronos, Sarpedon  
mighty of girth,  
And Minos! Minos, the searcher of hearts,  
judge of the earth!  
How was the house goodly for feast and  
sleep;  
Who shall tell the foundations, for they were  
deep!

Laughed all the land, for the ships  
Gathered the spoils of the sea;  
Tyre yielded her increase, the cities of old,  
Ophir and Zend, paid tribute; Egypt that  
lips

<sup>1</sup>ZEUS.



First the frontal of day made offering due  
To the Pride of the sea of the sea's first-  
fruits!

High on a throne graved in the face of the  
rock,

Set to the sea and the caved sky and the ships,  
Judged the chosen of Zeus, Minos, Searcher  
of hearts.

Shall the pride of the house ever be full,  
Or ever fall down the tower of the Sons of  
the Bull?

Thrice nine winters, nine summers, did he  
doom for our Lord,

He, Minos, familiar friend of King Zeus.

All wisdom, all knowledge were his, all force  
of the sea.

Poseidon that shaketh the land held him for  
friend;

He was dreadful, he knew no end!

But tell of the end of Britomart, white-  
shouldered maid,

Of Sarpedon the end, of Daedalus, cunning  
of hand;

Of Megara what hath he made?

Nay, but Pasiphaë, blood-tresséd queen, let  
me sing, and her deed without name!

For woe brooded over the house, and  
stealthily came

Darkness, and rending apart, and wailing,  
and shame.

What shall wisdom avail,  
Or knowledge profit a man?  
How shall Peace go abroad  
To smile and plenish the land,  
Where Love is not, but Lust?  
Lust drieth to dust;  
Sin enters, and pale  
Care doth hanker, and Trust  
Shivereth, falleth to fail.  
Pasiphaë! Out! She sinned and fell down  
Clogged in the mire of her shame;  
Swift Androgeos, leaping for battle, fell, and  
so fell  
Sweet-bosomed Ariadne with love on her  
lips.  
Alas, who of them all remaineth to tell?  
Dwindles the pride of the house that was  
forceful and keen.  
The wild nettle blows where proud lilies  
have been!

## CHORUS I

One remaineth!

## CHORUS II

Cometh!

## CHORUS III

To battle with death!

CHORUS IV

What is thy thought?

CHORUS V

I know it!

CHORUS VI

Phaedra is near.

CHORUS

Phaedra resteth, of ruinous beauty, white  
with desire!

O gloomy, ravenous eyes,

O hair black as the plumes of night!

Phaedra, of smouldering eyes

Fired with the mutter of fire,

The burnt mouth of desire,

And writhing fingers of fever and fire!

Phaedra, of snake-black hair

And searching face of a wolf!

Lo, a scalding drop of Pasiphaë's blood

Hissed on the white of her flesh,

And gave her a thirst never to tire.

Phaedra, Phaedra, lo, for an end of song!

To the house she resteth alone for ransom or  
wrong.

MINOS

What sing ye of Phaedra, my last flower,

The last flower of my marriage-wreath?

## CHORUS I

By tingling blood I know her here  
In this empty land.

## CHORUS II

Is she here?

The red dawn's issue cometh to pass.  
Listen ye to the mourning wind.

In a pause of listening, the wind is heard shrilling.  
The shock of the waves increases.

Thro' the gates of the storm,  
Down the mass'd battalions of air,  
Full of the whistling fear  
Wherewith it shaketh us,  
Phaedra coming with swiftly seeking eyes,  
And the grudge that never dies!

PHAEDRA comes swiftly up the path from the shore,  
and stands at the edge of the cliff, looking at MINOS,  
who sees her, but gives no sign. The CHORUS hail her  
with a wailing chant.

Phaedra! Pasiphaë's child!  
Alone on the torrent of fate—  
Thee now Judgment and Vengeance await,  
Stained with the stain that defiled,  
The spot, the smirch and the stain  
Of a spurned love bitten wild  
To torture of pain!  
O marr'd visage, never to gladden again,  
For never can be forgiven the soilure of  
love;

On the soul that sinneth must fall wrath  
 from above  
 Till the debt be lain.  
 Phaedra! Phaedra! Lo, for an end of  
 song,  
 See in the low clouds warping the land  
 Phaedra, last of the Cretans, at hand.

MINOS (muttering)

I see her, Phaedra, once my child.

CHORUS (watching the two)

As when two lions on the waste  
 That sudden meet, dare not forego  
 The grudge they owe,  
 And greet not, neither eye each other,  
 But stand awaiting the fate  
 That works askance in the mind—  
 So here of royal race the sire and whelp  
 Stand grimly cognizant; nor passes between  
 Their lockt lips one All hail! or Blest art  
 thou!  
 O storm-beset! O driven apart!

[PHAEDRA has now approached MINOS.]

PHAEDRA

With no rejoicing, nor memories,  
 Nor leap of nature to nature do I,

Queen of Athenians, greet thee, Cretan—  
Once king, now exile under a ban,  
Journeying no more surely nor gladly  
Than I. Am I so sure or so glad?  
Death-bound art thou; and I, fate-bitten,  
Drive where I must, by passion urged.

MINOS

An ill team hales thy car.

PHAEDRA

A darker evil flogs the steeds.

MINOS

Woe on our house! The air is thick  
With hurrying clouds, and wave leaps wave,  
Emulous which shall gulph the ship!

CHORUS

Hark! the Erinnyes riding the storm.

PHAEDRA

Madder the storm that screameth within.

MINOS

Better meet death, and so end all.

## CHORUS

Look to it, ye! The Goddess revealed  
A way to escape Pasiphaë's debt—  
O sin-dabbled, wreckt Pasiphaë!

## PHAEDRA (stung)

How say ye, slaves, that speak ill of a queen  
To me a queen?

## CHORUS

I stand in a case  
Where ancient wrong stares horribly.

## PHAEDRA

Go to! Where fate drives, sin is not.  
Necessity doth bind us.

## CHORUS

How shall be named her deed?

## PHAEDRA

Out, dogs, that spurn but the fallen—  
Jackals yelping a lion's track!  
Dead is that queen that nurtured ye  
With kindly offices, in and out,  
A mother to your tribe!  
She is dead, she is dead; and her fault,  
Irresistible, sudden,

Dead too, atoned by death,  
And shame which is death in life.  
Shall not the Gods give over? And ye,  
If they rest, shall ye not give over?  
A trip! And your tongues a-wagging!  
Reproaches of you, with mud, not blood  
In the veins! (To Minos) And on you  
shame,  
King once, and now a slave  
Whipt by your slaves!

## MINOS

O Phaëdra,  
Peace with the dead! And on us  
Be peace if thou wilt; for thus Artemis,  
Gleaming white from the heart of the fire,  
Spake even now: If my house save a life,  
That act saveth me, thy father, and thee,  
Last of my line. Peace now to the dead,  
And to the living an end of strife.

[PHAEDRA reflects, and then speaks suddenly.]

## PHAEDRA

Rehearse that word of God.

## MINOS

Tell her the doom of the Goddess.



CHORUS

Thus and thus uttered She  
 That haunts the fallows when days are young,  
 And is discerned in the wind of dawn:  
 "Trembles a life beloved of me,  
 Swayed in floods of riotous breath,  
 Not his breath—which if thy house shall  
     save,  
 So shall the act save thee and thy house."

PHAEDRA

Here is a marvel, worthy of wonder!  
 Such life have I to pluck from the grave;  
 Such have followed over the sea,  
 Resting not, staying not, ever pursuing.  
 Courage then, falter not, be not afraid.

CHORUS

Thou that art last shall be first,  
 Ransomer of thy land!  
 Now therefore boldly unto the Reaper stand  
 With entreaty and prayer washed over thy  
     hardy eyes,  
 That he yield, ere the king dies,  
 And we die!

PHAEDRA

Ye! Nay, not ye.  
 Such as ye God strikes not,

But leaves to rot and return  
Into the mould. But such as have force  
To dare him he strikes. Me ere long,  
Hardily daring, he well may strike,  
If I, counting the price,  
Dare all for one crown of joy.

The man liveth yet whom your Goddess, not  
mine,  
Regardeth—Hippolytus, son to my lord,  
Whom to sin once I tempted.

MINOS

Thou temptedst him?

PHAEDRA

Ay, for I loved.

MINOS

Treachery?

PHAEDRA

Traitress sooner  
To a man than a God. Eros with a torch  
Set the fire to my heart; and the flame  
leaped,  
Enkindled the brain, made me cunning.

MINOS

Thou toldest thy love?

PHAEDRA

I whispered it  
By night, in words that tripped each other.  
And in my palms my nails drew blood;  
And in the sockets my eyes were dry.

MINOS

And he?

PHAEDRA

He was very still.  
He trembled. But when I touched him  
Turned, white and fierce, upon me.

MINOS

Phaedra, what then?

PHAEDRA

In my chamber,  
Padding the floor, up and down,  
Fighting thro' dark which beat like hot waves,  
Opening, shutting fans of madness,  
I spent the night and the day.

MINOS

Phaedra, what then?

PHAEDRA

All my love

Seethed like gall. Loving I entered  
The chamber, hating came out,  
Craving him cold as once the heat.  
I compassed his wreck.

# MINOS

How?

PHAEDRA

His father,  
My husband, I sought, with cozening words  
Writhing, coiling about my tongue,  
Of violence offered me by Hippolytus.  
He curst his son, drave him abroad  
Out of the city, out of his lands;  
Prayed Poseidon, the Earth-Girdler,  
Boon for boon, that by all the thanks  
He, God, owed him, mortal,  
Requital swift on the youth Hippolytus—  
Malice of the inconsolate sea,  
Chill death on the sea-beach,  
Unhallowed—here, not in Attica,  
Lest death unconsecrate smirch that land  
And curse the invoker of cursing.  
The which achieved, soon I repented;  
Loving again—him now I am come  
To save, to succour, to see.  
Let Artemis joy—and live thou!

MINOS

Save him, daughter; but save thyself.  
'Tis thou art the slave, not I.

CHORUS

O dark-browed queen, look not so fatal!

PHAEDRA (to herself)

A bitter seed in my heart's croft  
Sows sharp discord. My fair dreaming  
Shattered lies. I must renounce  
All I builded so high.

But he will come again,  
My belovéd, and needs  
Must look on me. He will scorn me,  
Yet I shall see his eyes!

MINOS

See him not. But cry to Poseidon,  
Confessing thy fault.

PHAEDRA

To see him I came—  
To see him once more—to speak with him  
—touch him!  
Once more to touch him!

MINOS

Thou hatest? Or lovest?

PHAEDRA

Love—hate—are they not one?  
I need him—he draws me—all my body  
Acheth for him. Ah, Gods, give me ease!  
I die, Gods! I burn!

CHORUS

See how her passion tears at her!  
See where her palms have clencht  
The dark blood wells and spreads!  
O fatal seed of Zeus grafted in her!

(To MINOS)

But thou, thus worn and weariful,  
Withdraw thyself a space from wind and  
storm,  
Watchful that mercy break the dark clouds  
thro',  
Streaming like pennons of the issuing day.

PHAEDRA

On me reclined, seek we the tents,  
Whence, thou asleep, I'll work for all.

She withdraws MINOS from the scene, leading him  
to the tents. The storm is now high and fierce.

## CHORUS

Her pride shall be as a tower  
To endure for a day!  
But the tide riseth, the waterfloods leap,  
Poseidon shaketh the reins; all the deep  
Groweth hungry and grey—  
Then at hand is the hour!

See, like a bleacht dog-wolf  
Outmastered by his whelp,  
Timorous goeth the King, in doubt,  
Bending before the fury he bred,  
And her feverous calm.

O of all punishments the worst  
And hardest to be borne,  
To see himself distorted in her soul!  
O sharper than the thorn,  
Than aloe-spike more resolutely keen,  
Unendurable scorn,  
That he who sinneth once  
Cannot thereafter sorrow and do well,  
But sows a fatal seed  
Of shame where might renew honour's old  
citadel.

Herein, methinks, Fate urges hard,  
And flinty the heart of God,  
Since man to sin by necessary force  
Drifteth, nor can retard  
The swirling pit that sucks him deeply down

To death, where Fortune guides his neighbour's course  
To equal unearned glory and reward.  
But harder yet the scourges of the rod,  
That not content with death  
Nor the labour of choked breath,  
Brandeth his seed till the tide of woe be  
run!

## CHORUS I

Give over, give over, I hear the tramp  
Of horses, the groaning of wheels!

[They look to the shore below.

## CHORUS II

Lo, a traveller headeth the gale!

## CHORUS III

His cloak is a banner, sport of the wind!

## CHORUS IV

He holdeth his spear that the fury may not  
prevail,  
Nor shake his well-knitted limbs.

## CHORUS V

He scorneth to look behind  
At the wide ruin of foam.



## CHORUS VI

And see! He beareth for crest  
The Sphinx wingéd and fierce.

## CHORUS I

Tender of years, Athenian, nobly born;  
Poseidon he holdeth in scorn—  
That setteth the look of a hawk to the storm  
And smileth at ease.

## CHORUS II

This, this is he, that should earn our sur-  
cease.

HIPPOLYTUS drives his chariot up the steep road  
from the shore. The CHORUS hail him.

## CHORUS

Hail, O King's son, that lightest on the  
weary!  
Hold—that thy light depart not those that  
grieve.

## HIPPOLYTUS

If king got me, no king calleth me son.

## CHORUS

Yea, but I know thee sprung from the  
Amazon,

From battle-breathing Antiopé,  
And Theseus, tamer of men!  
Thou Sun-anointed, begot-of splendid wed-  
lock,  
Thou nervy hunter, Hippolytus,  
I know what gloomy fate  
And hoarse envious breath  
Urgeth thee on to abjure  
Thy pride of estate!

## HIPPOLYTUS

What I must bear let my shoulders suffice.

## CHORUS

Nay, surely some blessed God  
Favours thee!

## HIPPOLYTUS

Still I serve—  
As once in life, now in death.

## CHORUS

Often the Gods seem harsh, and man  
Driven thereby to riot.

## HIPPOLYTUS

Shall a man, then, impoverish himself?  
If God sink, man may stand upright,  
True to the God he has made.

CHORUS

What God thinkest thou to make?

HIPPOLYTUS

I make but of that which I find,  
 Elemental, veined in the earth:  
 Here fleeting kindness, grace of tears,  
 And here swift flight to a mark; here  
     patience,  
 Long watching, service pure, glad eyes,  
 Clean limbs; rejoicing; giving of thanks—  
 For of such I think God is.

CHORUS

                                Thou thinkest!  
 Stricken to exile, cursed by kindred!

HIPPOLYTUS

Unjustly stricken, wounded sore,  
 I hold such nothing to my loss.

CHORUS

What hast thou lost, Hippolytus?

HIPPOLYTUS

                                Faith.  
 Faith in the earth. How should ye know,  
 Who know not my search, my empty soul

Anhungered? Oh, I lived tranquil days  
In the deme where Athens feels the sea  
Smiling towards her, in the cleft  
Between the hills' breasts, seamless of scar  
Or jut of rock; between the hills  
Where hides the temple of Artemis,  
The Huntress, Delian-born.  
I lived there tranquil in wind and sun,  
Tanned by the wind, by sun made ripe,  
To growth in service chaste, since I  
To the chaste Goddess was dedicate,  
From my youth upward. Tender I made  
Of body and mind, yet saw her never,  
Nor knew—yet felt her there in the wind,  
In morning glory of sun, in moonlight,  
In whisper of leaves and sighing breath of  
the pines—  
But saw at last.

Like the wind's spirit,  
Like the wind's spirit in open lands,  
A young wild maiden, with hounds astrain,  
Stood in the wood, and looked and wondered.

White shone her shoulder in the still wood-  
land,  
White her knee under green kirtle;  
Peering she stood, astart like a bird  
To flutter of leaves. Swift then a smile  
Rayed like a morning flush upon her,  
Sunned her serious gaze and met me,  
Worshipping there with beating heart.

I saw the blue beam of her wide eyes,  
 Her carven throat and still raiment;  
 Whispered her name, as now I do,  
 Lifted hands, made my thanksgiving:  
 "O thou miracle, spirit of pure breath,  
 God be thanked for the glory he made in  
 thee!"

I loved a Goddess. Never since then this  
 world  
 Held a woman for me.

CHORUS

Thou servest well. We of Crete serve her.

HIPPOLYTUS

I had served unknowing; now served I on  
 With reasons for my praises;  
 Adored her when sun smote the sea's cold  
 rim  
 To sudden fire; in the moon's fair phases  
 Made faithful tender of sober days;  
 Gave her the breath of wholesome life,  
 Guerdon of body, guerdon of mind,  
 Worship of limbs; for thus  
 She will be served that loveth in us  
 Prepossession that foileth sin.  
 So I waxt strong, and with strength too  
 praised her  
 Till that day dawned that I may not name.

## CHORUS

Ah, but I know it!

## HIPPOLYTUS

O pool of sin!

The fair woman desecrate;  
Lust in love and lust in hate!  
Bright breasts with milk of gall,  
Fierce lips that would suck all  
Honour out, and kissing find  
Honour in the unclean mind.  
Phaedra, child of Peitho's brood,  
Bred this cancer in my blood;  
Made love unlovely, unmirthed mirth,  
Garbed in scum the daedal earth.

## CHORUS

O greater horror than this hour!  
Speak on and fill the cup of this wrath.

## HIPPOLYTUS

I, curst alike of Gods and Father—  
When he that did beget me  
Held me the traitor they perjur'd me,  
With curses thrust me out, and charged  
Poseidon to make an end—  
Not slow to meet him, now call on death.

## CHORUS

The storm thickens and grows!  
The spears of the army of death,  
Bare as the wild boar's teeth,  
Gleam for their glutting of blood.  
Soul of a God, grudged by God, to thy foes  
Abandoned, and shame beneath  
The licking and suck of the flood;  
To the rage of the wind that blows,  
And the fear that grows!

## HIPPOLYTUS

Nay, I am ripe for death  
Whom Love hath despised.  
My soul it hath agonised:  
What should my body fear?

## CHORUS

O son, wait still upon Love,  
For he dwelleth here;  
Tho' see him ye may not nor hear  
Even the lilt of his wings,  
He hovereth near.

## HIPPOLYTUS

Yea, for within me sings  
A clear voice, saying, Fast  
Take up heart, for at last

Lighteth Love upon earth—  
And thy torment bypast.

CHORUS

Love is near to the birth:  
Soon like the morning star  
He shall guide thee where gardens are,  
And fountains of sweet water,  
And an end of war.

HIPPOLYTUS

Maybe the swift daughter  
Of Leto, the girdled, the pure,  
Artemis eager and sure,  
Will snatch me that served her ever  
From Hades' allure.

CHORUS

Thou shalt 'scape the fret and the fever,  
Thou that art white!  
Thou shalt pass in the night  
As the worn soul from the breath of a man,  
And the end be light!

Let her forget thee not! But hold,  
Let her defend thee; for Theseus' wife  
Cometh with evil on her brows  
Ridging them straight over her waiting  
eyes.



O full of injuries!  
 O thou that holdest Crete  
 In the throes of thy forceful hands,  
 Phaedra, look to the saving that lies  
 As a spell, as a wonder-stroke,  
 Mute, till thou bid it rise!

### HIPPOLYTUS

Hold ye; nay, withdraw yourselves rather,  
 For the issue is mine, and is now.

He descends from his chariot, and stands to meet  
 PHAEDRA. The CHORUS prepare to withdraw.

### CHORUS

A dread encounter, fraught with fate!  
 Lo, in this injured one,  
 Under death's eyes, our life;  
 And she who drew him within their dreadful  
     scope  
 Must save, or all must perish!  
 Come, let us pray awhile  
 With hands uplifted to our patron Gods:  
 Guardians of Crete! Artemis, Pythian  
     Apollo!

They withdraw to the back of the altar. The wind  
 blows furiously. PHAEDRA enters, battling against it.  
 She stops when she sees HIPPOLYTUS; then comes  
 slowly and stealthily forward until she is close to him.  
 Her movements are those of a leopardess.

PHAEDRA

No rest! I have no rest.

HIPPOLYTUS

What dost thou seek?

PHAEDRA

Ease.

I am tormented. I follow thee.

HIPPOLYTUS

To see the end? Trust Poseidon.  
Hark to him now.

PHAEDRA

O what has death to do with thee?  
Grey death—and thy sanguine life!

HIPPOLYTUS

Drained of honour, 'tis wan.

PHAEDRA

Honour! Thou hast it. I give it thee.

HIPPOLYTUS

Thou?

PHAEDRA

Power is honour.  
Minos dieth; Crete falleth mine.  
I give thee Crete.

HIPPOLYTUS

What canst thou give?  
Peace, let me die. I ask nothing of thee  
But that.

PHAEDRA

To wrangle I came not.  
Rather to sue.

HIPPOLYTUS

As master of slave,  
A goad in thy hand, woman.

PHAEDRA

O not to add a curse  
To those thou fightest I come!  
But to redeem thy life, and mine,  
Self-martyred by reproach not tolerable.  
I do repent, Hippolytus—  
I would repair! Give me  
Thy pardon!

HIPPOLYTUS

Peace, let me die.

## PHAEDRA

Thou hast prevailed and mastered me!  
I will keep peace, and thou shalt have it  
So but thou kiss me.

## HIPPOLYTUS

Kiss thee?  
Forgive thee? Why should I not?  
Consecrate, I, to death; see now  
I kiss thee, Queen. Be mother of sons  
That shall be kings if thou learn queenship.  
Pass to more honour, and I to death  
More smoothly, since purged of anger.

[He kisses her. She shivers, then clings to him.]

## PHAEDRA

Not thy bright blood, O lord!  
Nor death if I could encompass thee  
So with my arms, so with my mouth,  
That we twain might fly clinging together,  
Conjoint in bliss! Or if death must be  
In wait for the twain, let us heap up  
Our life-draught full, passing in swoon,  
Contented that one wild joy  
Hath crowned our thirst and left us filled!

[He rejects her.]

## HIPPOLYTUS

Away, away!  
Seek not again to sting in my wound,  
Nor add one shame to the marks I bear.

## PHAEDRA

Thou kissedst me! By the Paphian's fire  
And all her flames, leave not thou me!

## HIPPOLYTUS

Now, by thy brows benign,  
Artemis, bend down thy face to me!

[Her arms are about him.

## PHAEDRA

See now, my lips are a pasture-ground,  
Mine eyes, see, they are brimmed with love!  
See my cheeks, are they fresh? Is my side  
cool?

Is here a blossom worthy to pluck?  
Treasured for thy strong harvesting, lord!

[He sees her not, nor regards her.

## HIPPOLYTUS

O thou foolish, insensible,  
Whom worm hath bitten, and made  
Within thy heart his cancerous nest,

And seared thine eyes, and blotted the  
world—

Learn of the wreck thou hast made of mine,  
Of that fair garden, once my world!

When thro' thy deed I first blasphemed  
The cradling light that held us both,  
Scared to panic, o'er land and sea,  
O'er sea and land and sky I ranged,  
Crying in empty realms of the air,  
"Thou Spirit of Life, appear, be seen!  
Kill me, but openly; let me see  
Thy fair cruel face, that I once knew kind!"  
The blue stared, and the naked sun  
Pitiless cut my eyes. The blood  
Masked them, that thro' the film flared red  
The very sky; so I knew, not there  
Dwelt he, but only hatred and strife.  
God was not; but only Enormity.

Then in my pain I turned to the hills,  
The lonely mountains, whose gazing peaks  
Climb out of ken and bathe in the silence,  
Of old how lovely! But out of them  
Love spake nothing. An eagle screamed  
Above a lamb leagues under him;  
And the rock stared with sightless eyes  
On murder brooding. I dared the front  
Of lapping mists, quiet as the snow,  
Where vast in th' obscure I saw dim forms,

Saw gleams rending the dark—heard the  
crying

As of great storms, and pent-back seas  
Imminent with ruin and bulk of death,  
Not coexistent with Love, nor coequal.  
I shrieked—Where such terror may be,  
seek never

For love! Seek the earth—and fell my  
length

With buried face in her breathing breast,  
'Mong flowers and clinging grasses, swept  
To and fro by the wind. Then slyly  
Came lust to leer—out of thine eyes,  
Woman! and rent the earth amain  
To an open grave, still yawning for me,  
Filled with the rotting bones of love,  
Murdered. I sought the calm of the sea:  
Poseidon, couching in mantle grey,  
Turned me from all his laughing places,  
Where the sun sheds a welter of gold,  
Or the wide water sways in sleep,  
To face dismay of rocks and scars,  
Where dominion is to the snake and the weed,  
And tangles drift; to oozy places  
Where the sun comes not, nor freshet tide,  
Not healing breeze with morning in it;  
But all's a bloat and scummy growth  
Of wrack of spent ships, wan dead men,  
Smooth-lidded traps of unmanly death!  
Treachery lurked there, watching. I paled  
And crouched, saying, Love is not here!

Then where is Love? Ah, thou hast killed  
him!

Thou and thy vice! Go, sin no more,  
Lest I say, God made thee, and lust is God.

PHAEDRA has withdrawn herself from him, and now  
covers her face.

PHAEDRA (low)

O cruel, O harsh, inexorable  
Mis-handler of women! How do I sin  
When I lift fading eyes to the light?  
Is it a sin that I seek to live, or a sin  
That youth calls clear unto youth? O heart,  
Shall spring wither, and summer go,  
Boon autumn, with corn-sheaves in her arms,  
Pass, she too, looking down? So all  
The rout of the years, the flood-tide of life  
Course by us, bowed like grass to the sickle?  
Not that, Hippolytus; love was given  
To us for fruitage——

HIPPOLYTUS (aside)

I see in the woodland  
My Goddess, pure in the white light  
That rays at even from the first clear star,  
In still, high-girdled raiment!

(To PHAEDRA)

But thou—  
Thou manglest love as thou hast me,



With flesh-hooks raking his crimson wings  
Down from the sky! Wilt thou rob God?

[She straineth towards him.

PHAEDRA

I am distraught, my breath comes thick,  
Mine eyes are a scalding waste of tears;  
Fever eateth me: see, I fall down,  
I fall to thy feet. Hippolytus!  
Shame me, do with me as thou wilt—  
Phaedra the queen, thy dog!  
Spurn or misuse me—let me be with thee!

HIPPOLYTUS

I pray for you whom frenzy enters,  
For you whom craving possesses and tears.

PHAEDRA

Kiss me again—ah, but thou shalt!  
I have thy hand in my wasted hands—  
I cling to thy knees—I clasp thy chin!  
Stoop now, kissing me once! O Gods!  
I would spend all the glory of Athens  
That this tall youth once kiss my mouth!  
Lay thy proud lips on mine, Hippolytus,  
I anguish for them!

## HIPPOLYTUS

Off! Thou art foul,  
A leprous woman and poisonous.  
I shake thee off. Go, drag thy shame  
Where cleansing waters are. Taint me not.

Then he spurns her, and she recoils, and rage gathers  
in her, and breaks.

## PHAEDRA

So! 'Tis enough. Then, sick self-lover,  
Go thou to death, a craven soul  
That watches a woman shame herself,  
And gathers credit from each poor shift.  
Ah, but thou heartenest me for this work!

I could have saved thee, lulled the curse  
Pronounced upon thee and stooping for thee,  
The cold and curse of the sea, the malice  
Hid in the rocks, with death,  
Pale Death and Disaster on the watch.  
I would not save thee now; I would stand  
And watch the spilling thy traitor life,  
And laugh with clamour of shrill sea-birds  
Sure of a feast. Nay, listen and tremble!  
I invoke Poseidon, the storm-dweller,  
And all his horror: white sea-squalls  
That creeping cast their frozen shrouds,  
Gulfs of wet ruin, crested waves  
That race and ride each other in haste;  
Let these tear thy carcass as the teeth

Of rocks; suck thee under the traps  
 And shelves of rocks, that gaping fish,  
 Slow, blind monsters of soundless seas,  
 Crawl groping over thee. Nor rest then!  
 Let the unstaying sea give thee, wretch,  
 No stay at all, but toy with thee  
 In mock perpetual of ebb and flow,  
 Thro' tumult of black and stormy nights,  
 Through listless, long and idle days,  
 Till weed and scum, sickening of thee,  
 Bid blind worms fret thee to a rag;  
 Cast thee unhonoured, not sought, forgotten,  
 A loathing to thy foes, a burden  
 To that which gloated thy full of shame—  
 Dung for the spawn of tideless beds.

Hear me, thou Ancient of the Sea,  
 Poseidon! Pale-eyed Thetis, hear!

[HIPPOLYTUS sets a foot on his chariot.

#### HIPPOLYTUS

O woman, that dost rail to ease thy rankle  
 Of shame and scorn of thyself;  
 Thou that seekest to add  
 A pain to the pain I have lived,  
 What dost thou think of death?  
 Think'st thou he makes his bed in a thicket  
     of spines?  
 Nay, but his ways are quiet;

He dwelleth in fragrant places  
Of sleep, full of dreams, husht by murmuring  
pines.

Look now, Phaedra, slave of desire,  
I have trodden the mire  
Of envious days; I have called upon God  
To turn the light of his face.  
No sign! Heaven was black,  
And black the mantle he laid upon earth.  
Nothing for me spake of love, who prayed.

Then I fell back  
From the chase, saying, Curs't from birth!  
That, seeing, I might not know,  
Not hearing, discover  
The flame of that Spirit that broods and stirs,  
and is love!

Yet I know the hour is at hand when that  
fairest, that flusht  
Presence of God shall be here, to enfold us  
and lap us  
In a soft haven of solace, a beam of his light  
Shed on faint souls from the dawn. For I  
know  
Love, the King, liveth unseen, yet unheard,  
not felt,  
But to be known of men when the way shall  
be lit  
By the torches of God, now hidden from me!  
So I die well at ease, for behold! Love is  
in me, enshrined, but not known!

I that was formed to be of Love the lover,  
To sing his praises, now seek surefoot death,  
Seeing that other issue is denied me,  
The gleam I joyed in quenched and dark.  
Ho, now, Poseidon, have thy pleasure of me!

[He mounts his chariot and gathers the reins.

PHAEDRA

Go, scorner, of the voice of women crying,  
Slink thou, accurst from birth, to death more  
sharp.

HIPPOLYTUS drives his team down the path to the sea.  
The CHORUS come forward and watch him from the  
edge of the cliff. The storm is at its height.

CHORUS

Pride sitteth on his brows as on a throne,  
And he goeth, splendid, alone,  
By the foam-shattered, ruinous waste of the  
shore.  
The sea is mad, and shudders beneath  
The knees of the mighty one,  
Even Poseidon that holdeth the reins. The  
sea gnashes his teeth.  
The way lies withered and frore:  
Yet the hero urgeth him on.

PHAEDRA

Not for long!  
Hardly shall sea hold off so much as a span,

For Poseidon watches and waits.  
Hear ye the mew's? They are hoarse, they  
    wheel as the Fates  
That hanker the drowned eyes of a man  
And the tossed soul of him too!  
So let him weary of watching, and lo! when  
    manhood abates,  
He shall tire, and they in a throng  
Scream, and hover, and pounce!

## CHORUS

The wind raveth, I hear the shuddering  
    trees!  
Now it buffets the crest of the flood!  
The sea is amazed, distraught; yet the knees  
Of the terrible rider have grip.  
The wind is his whip!  
Ho, he cutteth the water, he raises his arm  
To passionate evil: the sea is white with  
    alarm—  
As a flogged horse, he showeth the whites of  
    his eyes!  
Now, beneficent Gods, help ye, arise  
Ere the hero dies!

## PHAEDRA

Vain your crying; the Gods are throned in  
    the skies;  
Haply they feast. Poseidon only is here,  
Taking his sport!

Lover, he, of the storm, and sudden shock  
of a wreck,  
The smooth, water-drowned deck,  
And ship reeling to port,  
Tossed, buffeted, trapped, derelict,  
With her wan sailors arow!  
Haste, Shaker of Earth, let his end be quick,  
Let his end be now!

CHORUS

Lo, he is well on the way  
And urgeth mainly the steeds  
O'er the water-swept beach! The gale  
maketh them swerve;  
They are restive, they sway;  
The tide races on—reaches—he's down!  
Nay, nay!  
O might of iron-cast nerve,  
O King, thou'rt a King this day  
For heroes to serve!

PHAEDRA (not looking)

What, does he linger yet,  
Outcast, spurned of women and Gods?  
Do the waves still fret  
To be at him and raven him down?  
Surely Poseidon, brooder of tempest, nods,  
Or the sea surgeth in vain!  
Hark to the battle above us—the sky is in  
pain!

Hark to the thunderous billows, the sweep of  
the rain,  
Hissing as rods.  
To beat to frenzy the struck flank of the  
main!  
Tell me now, what canst thou see?

## CHORUS

The foam is flung as a mist, the land is washt  
out:  
Nothing! The sea-beast is loose.

## PHAEDRA

Yea, for I hear him and join in the shout.

## CHORUS

Woe! Woe! look about, look about!  
Wave upon wave, fury fury pursues!  
Now all is clear. I can see.

## PHAEDRA

Hippolytus, where is he?

## CHORUS

The sea is upon him, about him, above—  
The green billow hangs curving in air—  
All the eyes of the sea are angry and bare!



It hangs quivering, mountainous, tossed—  
 Heu! It falls—he is lost—he is lost!  
 Horses and man sweep out, to death and  
 despair!  
 O queen, a hero, went there!

PHAEDRA

Lo, for an end of him, scorner of love!  
 Lo, Poseidon, conqueror! Masterful sea!  
 Lo, Phaedra, triumphing, queen to the end!  
 He cast me below him, and even below is he.

[A pause.

Hark to this clamour, than storm more shrill.  
 Who cometh crying?

CHORUS (looking landwards)

With fear-fanned eyes,  
 As one that's looked on havoc, he comes  
 Beating his way through the horsemen of  
 air—

A Cretan! Speak, we are Cretans.

[A MESSENGER from the tents comes in swiftly.

MESSENGER

The King! King Minos!

PHAEDRA

Tell what thou hast of the King my father.

## MESSENGER

He *was* thy father.

PHAEDRA (lifting her head)

King of Crete!

Now, Gods, ye mock me! I seek him out.

[She goes out to the tents.

## CHORUS

O ever dreadful, sudden in haste—  
How like a cloud she scourgeth on  
With black hair flying, and thin hands  
Raised up to tear the light. Speak thou.

## MESSENGER

The old King slept,  
But murmured in his sleep, and stirred, and  
woke,  
Saying in cold fashion, "The end is nigh.  
Bring ye my harness." So we did, and he,  
Raising himself, did do on bronze and leather,  
Set his great helm with nodding crest  
Upon his head, his sword to thigh,  
His sceptre took, and lightning-chargéd  
shield,  
And sat enthroned, as he were judge for Zeus  
Once more in Crete. So silence fell  
Wherein no man durst say him anything;

Nor did he speak.

We heard the tramp of men,  
The creak and groan of chariot-wheels,  
And panic fell on all, except on Minos,  
Set mute and cold above the bed  
With never glance or stir. They burst the  
doors,

A horde of shagged, fierce-eyed and sullen  
men,

Hungry for prey. But Minos sat still,  
As carved in marble, a frozen king;  
And no man spake nor moved. Then,  
when the storm

Seemed at its high of furious possession,  
And a vast bulk of water struck,  
To shake the broad foundations of the earth,  
The pallid King rose slowly, and spake like  
death,

Saying, "This is the Doom declared by  
Zeus.

Evil was done; evil ensued; and now  
Evil must end." And then he sat  
Again upon his throne, and bowed his head  
Down to his two stiff knees, and stayed, and  
died—

Alone, untoucht, indomitable.

#### CHORUS

Where is thy victory, sea? Where, death,  
thy pride?

Where, thin-lipped hate, thy pleasure in  
men's grief?

So died Hippolytus, so Minos died,  
Meeting you, armoured thus,  
Facing you thus, they died,  
Scorning your dreadful state;  
And each victorious  
Sought out the Fields Elysian, glorified.

Yet on Hippolytus  
Ye laid a vengeance keen;  
Ardent Hippolytus  
That kept him chaste and clean  
For sake of Her whom, loving, he could not  
know.

Hapless his fortune was  
That seeking high and low,  
Calling on Love, Love never showed his wing,  
Nor hope could bring  
That of some far-off day the dawn would  
spring  
To show earth beauteous.

Let us bewail his lamentable death,  
And tell his tale wherever youth  
Longeth and meeteth ruth.  
Let the sweet breath  
Of virgins sigh over his grave,  
The murmuring wave  
That serveth him at once for sod and funeral  
stave.

MESSENGER

The sea holdeth Hippolytus:  
What can ye pay, what rite,  
Where is no corpse, nor tomb to hallow?

CHORUS

Justly thou speakest. Seek rather we  
Our great-hearted King.

MESSENGER

Seek Phaedra first,  
Last of his house, last King of Crete.

CHORUS

Sombre-browed as of old,  
She cometh with convulséd hands  
And ruin scowling across her!  
O thou terrible Queen, harder than life,  
Fiercer than death,  
Look not so forceful upon us!

[PHAEDRA enters now.]

PHAEDRA

Minos is dead, passing a King  
With all his state about him.  
He might have lived, but is dead.  
What say ye? The kingship falleth to me,  
Last of the House of the Bull.

## CHORUS

Who can be King when storm is King?

## PHAEDRA

The storm that wrecked Hippolytus  
Wrecketh me not. Where ebbs your  
Dorian spirit?

## CHORUS

He shows the stoutest nerve who mourns  
Wrong done, good deeds avoided.

## PHAEDRA

Let those who covet safety follow  
Their queen. Who cometh here?

ARTEMIS appears, robed now in grey. She carries a  
torch. The dusk is falling in, and the storm has abated.

Who art thou, Spirit, walking as God?

## ARTEMIS

Thou last of an iron stock,  
That thinkest to delay  
Doom by thyself prepared;  
Seeker of ill, and cheat  
Of thyself, why should I stay?

Hast thou not wrought woe enough?  
 Death struck thy father lies  
 Whom death of thy lust had saved:  
 Is it enough? Thy lord dishonoured,  
 Thyself blood-guilty for him;  
 The Seër of lovely things under the sun,  
 Struck to the soul,  
 Blighted by thee to see foul things in sweet  
     things:  
 Pasiphaë's child, is this work enough?  
 Shall I delay?

PHAEDRA (awed)

I know thee not.  
 Yet do believe thou hast that strength  
 Thou vauntest. I think thou art God.

CHORUS

Artemis! Artemis!

PHAEDRA

Hear then, Goddess. By my father's soul  
 I fear thee not. That which I did  
 Was sown in me from my wother's womb,  
 As her deed in hers. We sowed it not,  
 But goaded like cattle followed the doom  
 Set of old. No fault at all  
 Lies in us fettered ones, swirling as wrack  
 Upon a flood racing to sea.  
 Strike therefore soon.

## ARTEMIS

I make an end  
Of thee and wrangling matters too high  
For thee to stretch at. Evil and Good  
Were set before thee. Thou wouldst sup ill.  
Thou madest choice. Now get thee backward.  
Poseidon awaiteth.

The GODDESS advances, and PHAEDRA, as if fighting invisible foes, steps back and back until she stands with her arms extended on the very verge of the cliff. She sees her peril, but is careless to avoid it. The GODDESS lifts her hand, and PHAEDRA with a great cry falls over the cliff. The CHORUS describe this action in quick whispers.

## CHORUS

She edgeth backward, fending with hands,  
As one that fighteth the breath of fire;  
Hatred haunteth her eyes and shame  
Unacknowledged and undeclared!  
Ah! Ah! This is the end.  
Now she is gone down quick to the doom  
prepared.

[They assemble themselves.

Begotten in wrong, with wrong upheld, and  
by wrong  
Driven to outraged end,  
Lo, the portion of him who seeketh out God  
To make him a friend!



God must abide with God world without end,  
And man cleave unto man on this mortal  
road.

What is the Wisdom of God without Power  
of God?

What Power, Wisdom, without the Love  
that is only in men,

Only for them? Our masters have trod  
And bruised us to blood—and how shall  
Love come again,

Since Wisdom ministers Lust, and Power  
spreadeth Lust abroad?

Shall there ever be Gods with love as of men,  
Or men nurse love in their hearts with  
wisdom of Gods

And power of Gods?

Scourged and beaten with rods,

Curst and hated in vain,

Can a God-man be, lord of himself and the  
hour,

Welding in one Love and Wisdom and  
Power?

Earth should kiss Heaven then.

Enough, Goddess, enough!

Is not the cup of thy vengeance full?

One by one they have perished, gone into  
the night—

As one that travelleth far

They have set their faces away,  
And their place knows them no more!

So in bad blood and hardened hearts begun,  
And in conflicting lust  
The terrible tale is told.  
Stay now thy hand, Artemis! Put up thy  
spear,  
Thou that strikest the deer!  
Smile out upon us, Maid without fear,  
For smitten to dust  
All the pomp of Minos and pride of his  
state,  
Fallen, fallen, that once were goodly and  
great;  
And all the Blood of the Bull spilt as it was  
foretold.

[The light rays again from the GODDESS.

#### ARTEMIS

Comfort ye, for the youth Hippolytus  
Liveth, pure of his grief, his passion  
Spent—in calm of vigil and prayer,  
With me in communion not of this world.

Deep in the woodland he hath his home,  
By the lake where no foot breaketh the  
silence:  
There I visit him, there he loveth me,  
There of each other we take our joy.

Comfort ye, Love cannot die that lendeth  
Rather than earneth. Ye Cretan wanderers,  
Follow your hope! In this high fashion  
God and Man mingle and mate each other:

Emptied each, and each fulfilled  
By love supreme that seeketh no price,  
Here and in Heaven they set a kingdom  
Fast for ever for all ye sorrowful.

Seek ye the ships, launch for your land,  
Homeward hie, passing in trustfulness  
Crest and furrow; holding in patience  
Your way over sea—for strife is ended.

[ARTEMIS disappears.]

### CHORUS

This is a faithful saying! and since She  
Whom ever Dorian eyes have sought,  
And to their children taught,  
Leaveth us now with words of peace,  
Let us await the issue she decrees;  
Bowing our heads until the storm be past,  
Waiting with hope the promise of new day.

The storm has died down. There is no wind, and  
over sea a bar of pale amber light shows, low down in  
the sky.

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